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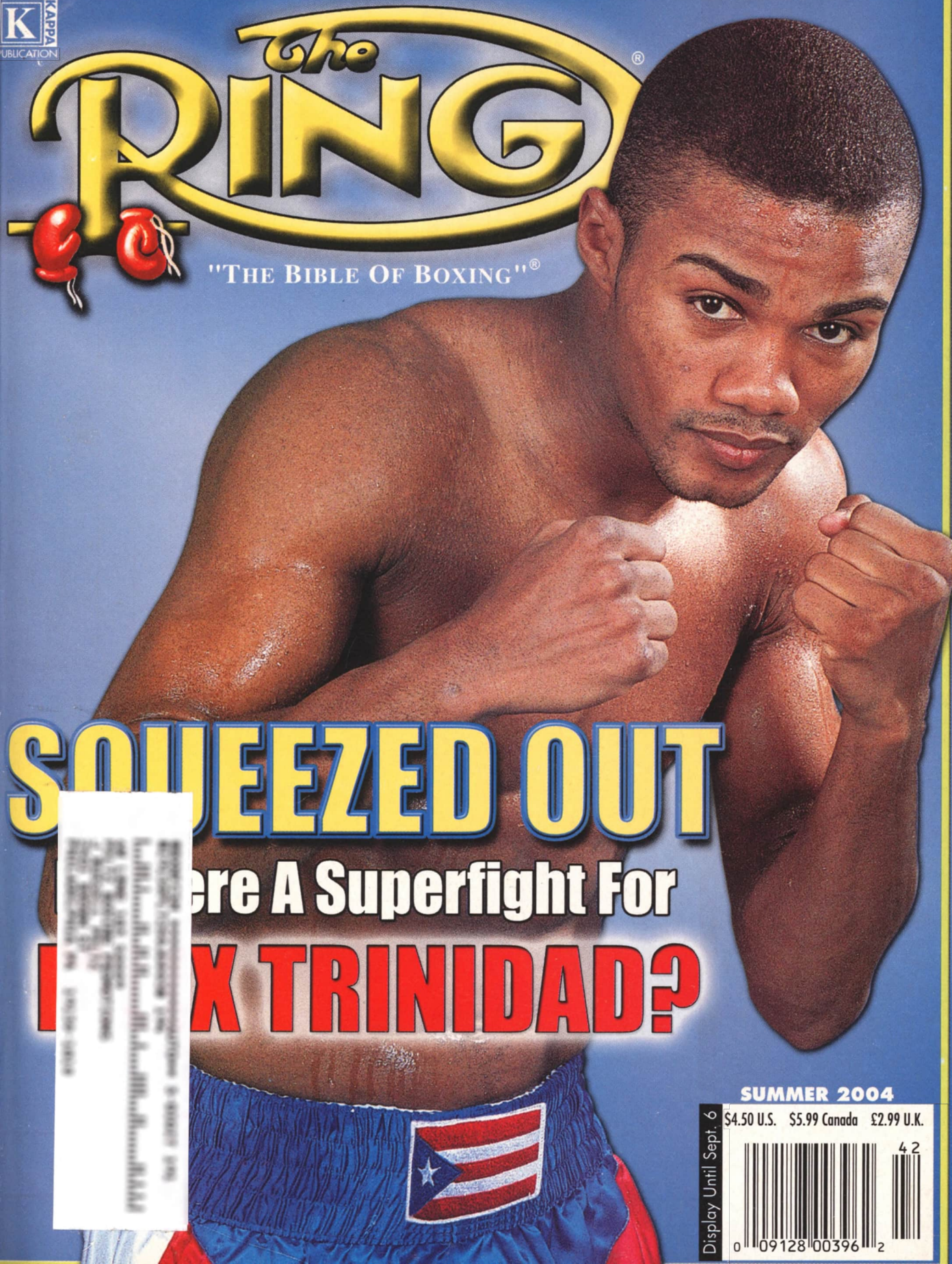

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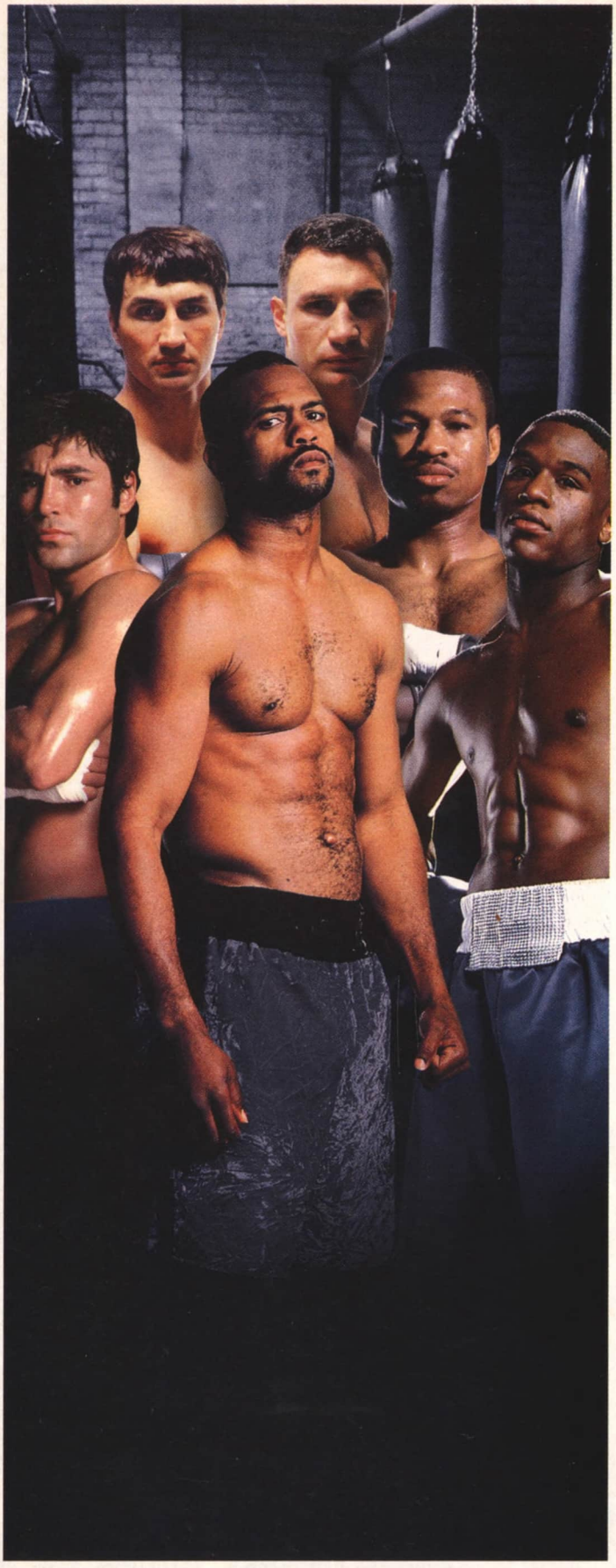

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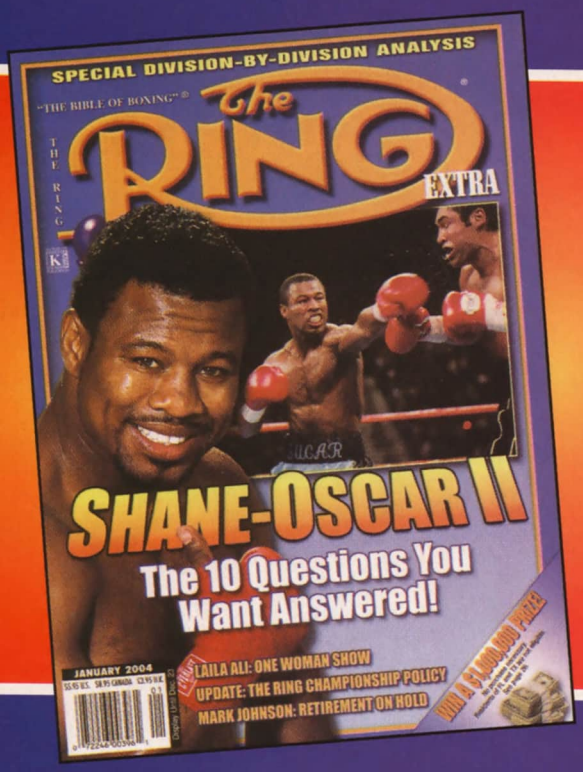

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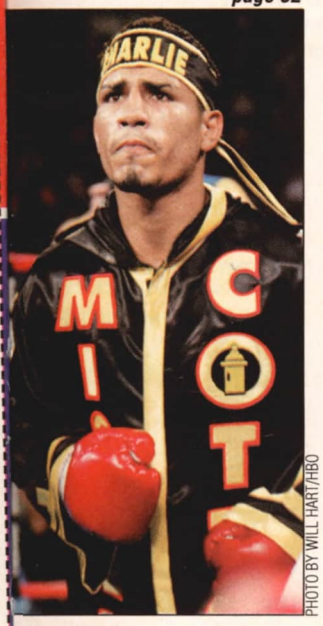

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

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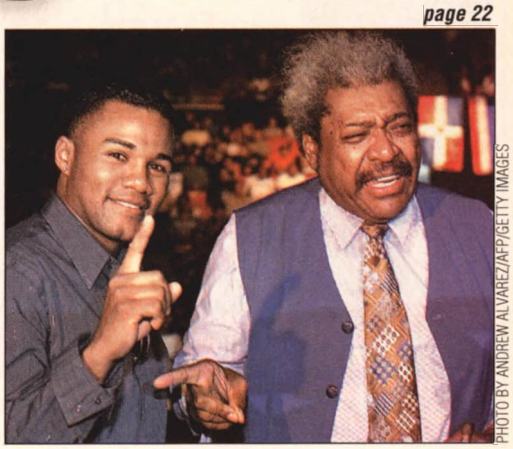

PHOTO BY ANDREW ALVAREZ/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

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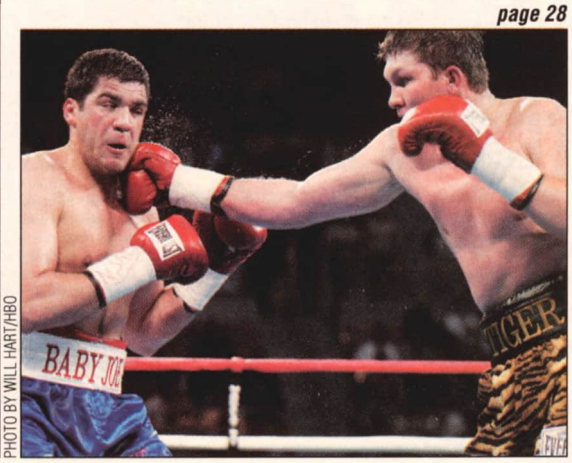

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Monica Fisher

RINGSIDE

I'm taking a wait-and-see attitude about the new boxing legislation that passed the Senate and is now in the House of Representatives. A lot of well-meaning people have been calling for a federal commission for a long time now, and if such a thing should come to pass, THE RING would certainly give it every benefit of the doubt in the hope that some of boxing's many problems could be solved. But I remain skeptical.

On the surface, the Muhammad Ali Boxing Reform Act was a good piece legislation, intended to curb unethical business practices within the industry. But it has been a toothless law that has done little, if anything, to change the way the sport operates. Proponents of the latest legislation claim things will be different this time, and if the bill becomes law, it will be enforced.

It sounds good in theory, but the government has never administered a professional sport before, so we really don't know what's inside that can of worms. In many ways politicians have a lot in common with the individuals who run alphabet organizations. Instead of taking bribes for rankings, most of our elected officials accept campaign contributions from special interest groups. And that scares me.

It's a great shame that it had to come to this, but it has, and we just might get to see if the U.S. government can do a better job of running boxing than it can of balancing the budget. Let's just hope we're not trading in one set of scoundrels and bumblers for another.

***

Time for a little bragging: A staff member and a number of freelancers have been honored by the Boxing Writers Association of America for the work they've done for THE RING in 2003.

Managing Editor Eric Raskin heads the list with a first-place finish in the "event coverage" category in BWAA's third-annual writing contest. The article that earned Eric the top prize was "Gatti-Ward: A Rivalry For The Ages," which appeared in the November '03 issue of THE RING EXTRA.

Also winning Barneys (the BWAA named its writing awards after the late Barney Nagler, a former president of the BWAA) are David Mayo, who took third place in the "investigative reporting" category for "Boxers Have Found A New Way To Cheat." David's expose on the hi-rise protective cups that have been giving certain fighters an unfair advantage appeared in the August '03 issue of THE RING. Joining Mayo with a third-place finish is Bernard Fernandez, whose "feature" category entry, "Chris Byrd: Ugly Duckling Or Beautiful Swan?", was published in the May '03 edition of THE RING EXTRA.

Four of the five photographers honored by the BWAA had their winning entries published in either THE RING or one of its sister boxing magazine. Al Bello took first in the "action" category and second in the "feature" category. Chris Farina came in first in the "feature" group, while Tom Casino was second in "action." Will Hart was third in the "feature" class.

Way to go, everybody. You're a big part of the reason that THE RING is still "The Bible Of Boxing."

***

Speaking of contributors, you may have noticed that we have a new writer covering the Las Vegas beat, former WBC bantamweight titleholder Wayne McCullough. Actually, Wayne made his RING debut in the July '04 issue, but I haven't had the space to acknowledge him until now. Welcome aboard, Wayne. If your journalistic skills turn out to be anywhere near as good as your fighting ability, readers are in for a treat.

Nigel Collins
Editor-in-Chief

Volume 83, No. 9 Summer 2004

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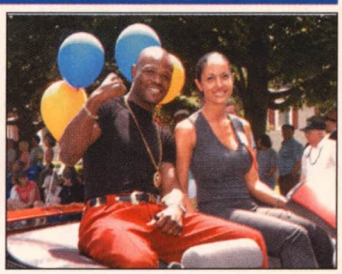


Hooray . . . Terry Norris strikes a fight pose for the fans.

CELEBRITY BOXING NIGHT

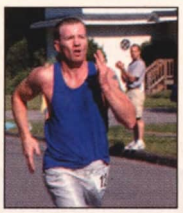
ANGEL MANFREDY

Fight Night . . . Popular boxers featured in action-packed bouts at Turning Stone Casino Resort.

MUSEUM GROUNDS

Autographs . . . George Foreman spends time signing autographs on the Museum grounds.

5K RACE, FUN RUN



Finish Line . . . "Irish" Micky Ward in stride.

Go . . . Ken Norton officially starts race of celebrity boxers and runners.

INDUCTION CEREMONY

A Moment in Time . . . McCallum, Shulberg, Foreman, Locche, and Cokes proudly display their Hall of Fame rings.

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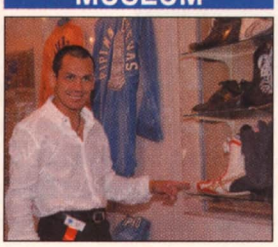
GOLF TOURNAMENT

Chip . . . Gerry Cooney (l) chips onto 18th green while Sir Henry Cooper (r) is enroute to next tee.

COCKTAIL PARTY

Stars . . . Boxers and fans enjoy VIP cocktail party reception.

MUSEUM

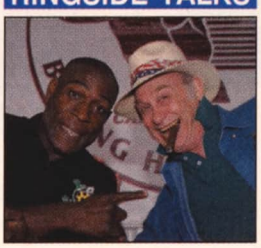


Ricardo Lopez points to his boxing shoes on display.

WORKOUT SESSIONS

Christy Martin laces up her gloves and Bernard Hopkins hits the speed bag.

RINGSIDE TALKS



Having Fun. . . Frank Bruno and Bert Sugar team up for a ringside lecture.

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ROUND ONE

SHANE CUTS THE CORD

The failures of father-son teams in boxing have been well-documented, from the O'Gradys to the Joneses to the Mayweathers. But while those sad stories piled up over the years, there were always exceptions to the rule, feel-good father-son tandems we could point to as proof that it *can* work. And chief among them over the last decade or so was the Mosleys. Jack Mosley was the picture of paternal perfection as Shane's manager and trainer, guiding him to titles at lightweight, welterweight, and junior middleweight. And even when Sugar Shane lost twice to Vernon Forrest in 2002 and his father took a lot of the heat, the Mosleys stuck together, their personal bond too strong for business to get in the way.

When the younger Mosley fell to Winky Wright in March, however, the family ties finally took a backseat. Just as in the Forrest fights, Jack was unable to give his son any helpful advice once Wright started getting the better of the action. About a week after the decisive loss, Shane fired the man he called "one of the all-time great trainers," the man he'd had in his corner for 25 years, since he first started boxing at age eight.

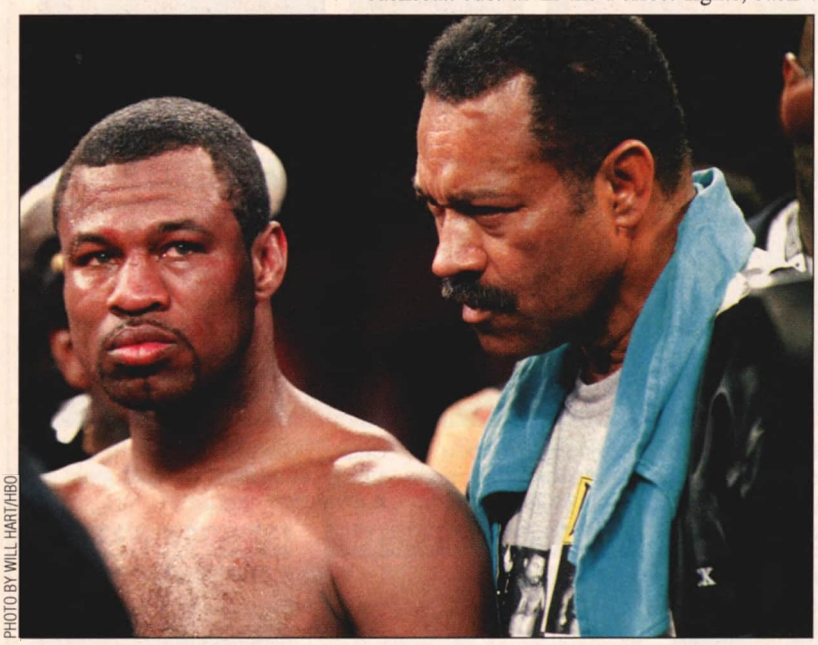


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

The Mosleys were a glum pair following the Wright fight

"I am going to miss working with my father," the three-division ex-champ said in a statement. "Together we have scaled many mountains, and I would never have had the success I have had if he had not been there to guide and teach me every step of the way … He has been a great father who I love very much. However, the time has come … to sever our professional relationship."

"Part of being a good parent is knowing when to let your children go," Jack said in his own prepared statement. "I understand and accept his decision that the time has come for him to be out there on his own. I will still be there for him, as I always have, as his father."

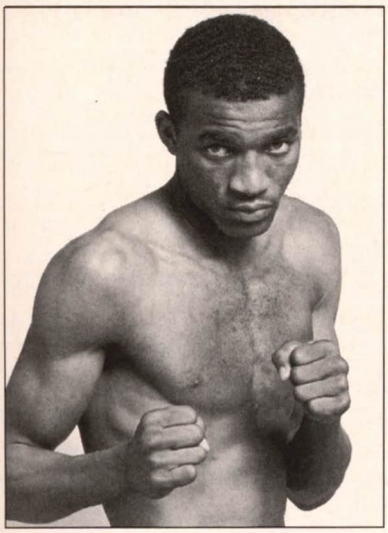
In late-March, Sugar Shane announced that he'd found his replacement—a man he's known since his pre-teen years and a man who just happens to be the current "hot" trainer. Joe Goossen, the latest in the line of cornermen everybody seems to want to work with (as Freddie Roach was in '03 and Buddy McGirt was in '02), is Mosley's new chief second. Goossen's been a winner lately, going 2-0 in the Diego Corrales-Joel Casamayor series *(see page 38)*. And a winner is just what Mosley needs, after prevailing in only one of his last five fights, that by controversial decision over Oscar De La Hoya.

Is Mosley used up at age 32, or can the right trainer again turn him into the bouncing-on-his-toes, combination-punching dynamo who ascended to the top of the pound-for-pound list at the turn of the millennium? With all due respect to Jack Mosley, Sugar Shane needed to make the decision he did in order to at least give himself a chance of producing the answer he's hoping for.

—Eric Raskin

FLETCHER: "I WILL WIN MY FREEDOM"

Since our August 2000 issue, when we a published an exclusive story on the death-row plight of former lightweight contender Anthony Fletcher, THE RING has been chronicling the fighter's sad saga. Finally, he has some good news. Citing that the attorney at Fletcher's original trial was ineffective, Judge John Milton Younge of Pennsylvania Common Pleas Court vacated Fletcher's first-degree murder conviction and death sentence in February. Fletcher was convicted of murdering Vaughn Christopher in February of 1993 and has been in prison ever since. His death warrant had been signed by former Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge.



Fletcher's getting a second chance

The prosecution has the right to appeal the judge's decision, proceed with a new trial, or set him free. As we went to press, the Philadephia District Attorney's office had yet to make a decision.

In a letter sent to THE RING from Fletcher at Greene State Correctional Institution in Waynesburg, Pennsylvania, he wrote, "Good news, I got a new trial and will win my freedom once it's all over. It's all about to come out now."

Since his sentence was issued, Fletcher worked vigorously at his own defense, often writing to journalists, attorneys, and forensic experts. He contacted the law firm of Wolf, Block, Schoor, and Solis-Cohen in Philadelphia, and they worked pro bono on his appeal.

Fletcher has always maintained that he had a physical struggle with Christopher, that Christopher pulled the gun, and that it discharged during the course of that struggle. Christopher was shot in the right flank and right thigh. He left the scene of the shooting on his own and died about 12 hours later in the hospital.

The decision to vacate Fletcher's conviction and sentence hinged on a bruise that was left on Christopher's chest. Dr. Hydow Park performed the autopsy on Christopher, but never testified at Fletcher's trial because he was out of the country on a medical mission. Another doctor from the medical examiner's office testified in his place and stated that the bruise was from a bullet and not a struggle. During the appeal process, Park was located and he testified that the bruise was consistent with a struggle and was not the result of a bullet. That helped sway the judge's decision.

Fletcher, 46, was a southpaw stylist who compiled a 24-4-1 (8) record. He beat future titleholders Fred Pendleton and Livingstone Bramble and retired from the ring in 1990 after a knockout loss to Oba Carr.

To contribute to Fletcher's defense fund, please write to Diane Settles, 1313 S. 49th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19143.

—Robert Cassidy

THE BOXING BOOKSHELF

What do Bernard Hopkins, Henry Armstrong, and Bonecrusher Smith have in common? If you had a copy of *Boxing's Most Wanted: The Top 10 Book Of Champs, Chumps, And Punch-Drunk Palookas* (Brassey's Inc., 269 pages, soft cover, $12.95) you'd know that all three fighters lost their professional debut. That's the sort of fun fact this book specializes in, and whether you're a new fan or a crusty old know-it-all, there's much here to enjoy.

Brassey's has already published *Football's Most Wanted*, *Baseball's Most Wanted*, and *Rock & Roll's Most Wanted*, so it was only a matter of time before the Sweet Science was given its own book of lists. The book is co-authored by David L. Hudson Jr. and Mike Fitzgerald Jr., names you might recognize since both have contributed to various fight magazines, books, and Web sites.

A few quibbles: How can you make a list of bad decisions without mentioning the Kid Gavilan-Billy Graham fiasco of 1951, or the Gavilan-Johnny Saxton match of '54? And how can you make a list of singing boxers and not mention Muhammad Ali? Ali recorded an excellent version of "Stand By Me" in 1964 and also sang well in the off-Broadway production of *Big Time Buck White*, but he's been bumped here for Joe Frazier and the Knockouts. Please!

But *Baseball's Most Wanted* has already spawned a sequel, so perhaps *Boxing's Most Wanted* will someday follow the same route. The sport certainly has fodder for at least one more book of lists. Might we suggest a list of fighters with peculiar side jobs? That way, boxing's foremost underwear model, Richie LaMontagne, will at last be immortalized.

—Don Stradley

TV FIGHTS OF THE MONTH

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
3-14-04	Robbie Peden KO 5 Nate Campbell	FOXSN	jl	B-	A-	B+
Thanks, Nate, for showing Peden and everyone else where the soft spot is						
3-18-04	Rico Hoye KO 1 Donnell Wiggins	Show	lh	C	B-	B-
For reference, remember that Wiggins gave Jeff Lacy about all Lacy could handle						
3-18-04	Dorian Beaupierre D 10 Daniel Edouard	Show	m	C	B-	C
If you thought Beaupierre won it, you're not alone						
3-19-04	Daniel Ponce-DeLeon KO 5 Ivan Alvarez	Telef	f	C	D+	C
It'll be interesting to see how DeLeon reacts when someone can handle his power						
3-19-04	Juan Valenzuela KO 2 Guillermo Valdes	Telef	jw	C+	D+	C-
Not much of a tuneup for Valenzuela, but bring on Miguel Cotto anyway						
3-19-04	Julio Diaz KO 11 Courtney Burton	ESPN2	l	B+	A	B+
Excellent win for Diaz in a hell of a good fight						
3-25-04	Jhonny Gonzalez KO 6 Roger Gonzalez	HBOL	b	C+	B	C
Good showing by Gonzalez, but someone should tell him to stay away from Rafael Marquez						
3-25-04	**Jose Luis Valbuena KO 12 Israel Vasquez**	**HBOL**	**IBF jf**	**A-**	**B+**	**B-**
Proof that despite what you've always heard, sometimes going to the body gets you squat						
3-26-04	Kendall Holt KO 1 Gilberto Reyes	ESPN2	w	C-	B	B+
If this isn't on the list of best knockouts at the end of the year, someone check the judges						
3-26-04	Ebo Elder W 10 Oscar Diaz	ESPN2	jw	C+	B+	C+
How is it that a 21-year-old kid with 19 fights can look as shot as Diaz did?						
3-26-04	Yory Boy Campas W 10 Dewey Welliver	Telef	m	C-	C+	C+
Shopworn Campas lucky to get decision in hard-fought scrap						
3-27-04	Monte Barrett W 10 Dominick Guinn	HBO	h	B	B+	C+
Root for a guy who needs to be screamed at to fight, and sooner or later he'll break your heart						
3-27-04	Jermain Taylor KO 7 Alex Bunema	HBO	m	B	C-	C
We'd criticize Taylor's people for not picking on good, young, tough middleweights, but really, who is there?						
4-1-04	Steve Murray W 10 Martin Watson	Show	l	D+	B	B+
Good, hard, fast-paced fight; Murray's first-round knockdown the difference						
4-1-04	Michael Jennings KO 5 Brett James	Show	w	D+	C-	C
Nice win for Jennings, but who's his strength coach, Ivan Calderon?						
4-2-04	Orlando Salido KO 4 Omar Adorno	Telef	jl	B-	C-	D+
Salido plays it safe while hoping for winner of Marquez-Pacquiao at 126						
4-2-04	David Lopez KO 9 Jerson Ravelo	ESPN2	sm	C+	B	B-
Upset! How about Lopez against Jeff Lacy next?						
4-2-04	Emanuel Augustus W 12 Alex Trujillo	ESPN2	jw	B-	A-	C
We can't remember the last time a guy was in the zone the way Augustus was here						
4-2-04	Jose Lopez KO 2 Omar Soto	Telem	fl	C+	C+	B-
Lopez could have left both his jab and hook in the locker room and still won this one						
4-3-04	Sharmba Mitchell W 12 Michael Stewart	Show	jw	A-	C+	C
We never thought we'd say it, but Mitchell has become a throwback fighter; good for him						
4-3-04	Ricky Hatton KO 6 Dennis Pedersen	Show	jw	A-	D+	C+
With Micky Ward gone, Hatton looks more and more like the game's best bodypuncher						

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(World/Alphabet title fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN—Fox SportsNet; Uni—Univision; Telef—Telefutura; Telem—Telemundo; HBO L—HBO Latino

FROM STINGING TO SINGING

The list of boxers-turned-musicians includes heavyweight champs Ernie Terrell, Joe Frazier, and Larry Holmes, but like The Chipmunks, they never surmounted novelty status. That's not the case with Paul Thorn, the former middleweight who fought Roberto Duran before deserting the ring to develop the musical passion instilled in him as a young boy singing at tent revivals conducted by his father, a Church of God preacher.

Four CDs later, the 39-year-old Thorn is highly regarded in the singer/songwriter world. His 2002 CD, *Mission Temple Fireworks Stand*, was ranked among the top blues/southern rock albums of that year by Music Box Online critic T.J. Simon.

It was Thorn's uncle Merle, a former boxer, who got him started boxing at age 12. The Tupelo, Mississippi, youngster turned pro in 1985.

"I was like a lot of fighters who live in out-of-the way towns with no facilities, no quality sparring, and nothing except the desire to become a boxer," Thorn said. "You become a hero in the little town you live in, but even if you have talent, it's difficult."

Thorn went from socker to rocker (inset)

Duran was 36 and fighting for the 91st time when he met Thorn on November 3, 1987. He knocked Thorn down in the second round of their bout broadcast on USA's *Tuesday Night Fights*, and severe cuts forced Thorn to surrender after the sixth round.

"I couldn't have lost to a greater fighter," said Thorn. "It's thrilling as the years go by that I was in there with Duran."

Thorn even wrote about the experience in the title track of his first CD, *Hammer And Nail*. "I asked him why he had to knock me out, and he summed it up real well," Thorn said in explaining the title. "He said, 'I'd rather be a hammer than a nail.'"

Thorn's musical ascent began when he was discovered playing in a pizza parlor by a friend of Miles Copeland, manager of Sting. Not long afterward, Thorn—who'd never even attended a rock concert before—opened for Sting before 13,000 people in Nashville.

It was another quantum leap, but unlike the one that landed him in the ring opposite Duran, this one was no sweat. When it comes to inducing panic, Thorn says, the ring lights have it all over the footlights.

"Boxing and singing in front of people are two different things entirely. There's no comparison. I was never so scared as when I was sitting in a dressing room with my hands taped and the guy called out, 'It's time!' It's like going to an execution.

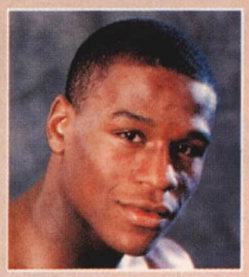
"The biggest part of being good at boxing is mental. When Roberto Duran went in that ring, he was completely relaxed. I, on the other hand, was crappin' in my pants."

Also an artist of growing renown, Thorn's artwork, CDs, touring schedule, and even highlights of his boxing career are available at paulthorn.com. And Thorn wants a return engagement with Duran—but this time in the recording studio. He won't rest, he says, until he trades licks with the best fighter to ever lick him.

"I will seek him out," Thorn vowed, "and we will jam."

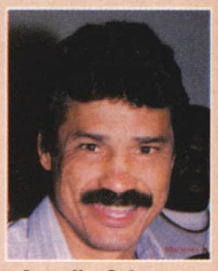
—Pete Ehrmann

OUTSIDE THE ROPES



Mayweather: Prison time possible

As we reported last issue, **Mike Tyson** got community service for his role in a hotel lobby brawl last June, but his supposed provokers got off even easier. In late-March, charges of menacing against both **Nestor Alvarez-Ramos** and **Samuel Velez** were dropped … **Floyd Mayweather**, who pleaded guilty to two domestic violence counts in 2002 in exchange for prosecutors dropping two other charges, is now being charged with misdemeanor domestic violence for striking **Josie Harris**, the mother of three of his four children, and also with misdemeanor assault and battery in connection with a December '03 bar fight in Grand Rapids, Michigan. If convicted of the former charge, Mayweather could face a prison term of one-to-five years. Mayweather's adviser, **Leonard Ellerbe**, told *The Grand Rapids Press*, "It's obvious that Floyd is a target" … The Senate approved legislation in late-March that would establish a United States Boxing Administration within the Labor Department—in other words, a national boxing commission. The bill was authored by Arizona Senator **John McCain** … Two men charged with vandalizing the **Joe Louis** monument in Detroit earlier this year pleaded guilty in late-March. It was expected as of press time that **Brett Cashman** and **John T. Price** would serve a few days in jail … New Jersey State Athletic Control Board Chairman **Gerard Gormley** resigned in mid-March following a complaint that he provided his friends with free passes to fights. In addition to giving up his $80,000-a-year job, Gormley also was required to pay $14,000 for issuing 28 gratuitous credentials in 2002 and 2003 … The WBC benevolently paid for former 130-pound titlist **Genaro Hernandez'** eye surgery in early-March. "Chicanito" had been suffering from double vision since his final fight, in 1998, but no more; early reports indicated that the operation was a success … Hall of Famer **Alexis Arguello** filed a lawsuit in late-March against video game publisher Electronic Arts, alleging that the game *Knockout Kings* used his likeness without permission … Jacksonville, Florida, heavyweight **Dave Rickman**, 29, died in late-March, two days after suffering a kayo loss to **Earl Ladson**. Rickman, 1-3 (1), went down from a barrage in the fourth and never regained consciousness. It was the first boxing death in the state of Georgia in more than a century … In Indonesia, on the other hand, there have been nine boxing deaths in the last four years. Hopefully, featherweight **Dian Hasibuan** won't be the 10th, but the 19-year-old remained in critical condition as of press time after suffering a kayo loss to **Jack Riu** in early-March … Several other deaths to pass along: 1960s flyweight champ **Salvatore Burruni**, whose 99-9-1 (31) record included a decision over **Pone Kingpetch** for the title in '65, died in late-March at age 71; '60s heavyweight contender **Tony Alongi**, who drew with **George Chuvalo** and **Jerry Quarry** en route to a 40-2-4 (23) record, died recently at age 64; and '90s junior middleweight **Piero Severini**, 19-5 (12) with 1 no-contest, died of a heart attack at age 35 … It's been a little more than a year since the great **Kid Gavilan** died, but it's recently been learned that the section of the cemetery in which he's buried does not permit memorial statues. To cover the cost of moving Gavilan's remains to another section, a memorial fund has been established. Those wishing to contribute can make donations out to "Veteran Boxers Association Of New York—Ring 8" with the memo "Kid Gavilan Memorial Fund," sent to Ring 8 at 2-03 Borden Ave., Long Island City, NY 11101.



Arguello: Suing over video game

THE PUNCHLINES

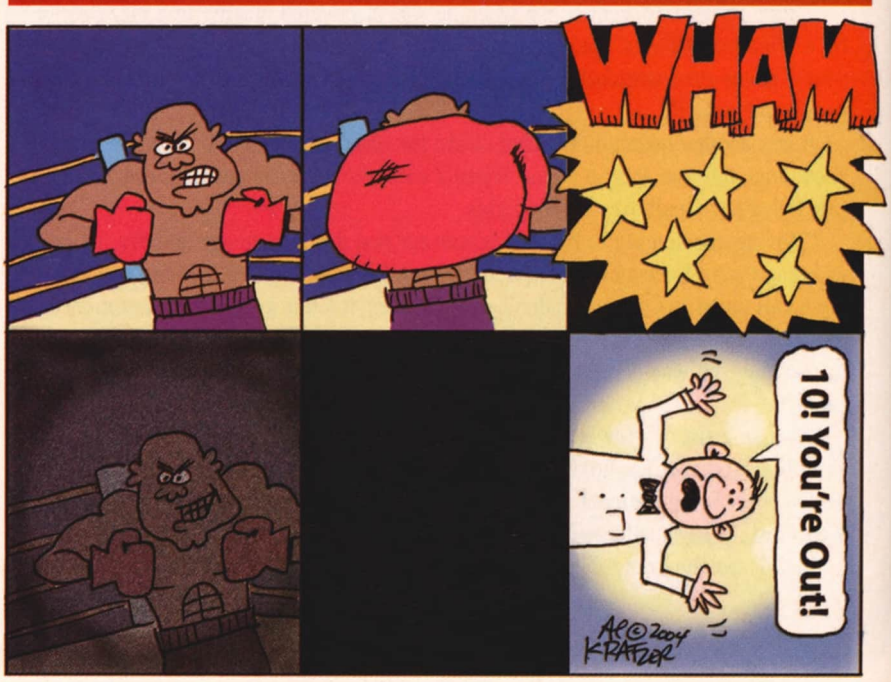
"Kiss Oscar De La Hoya goodnight if he fights Bernard Hopkins. Hopkins is going to eat him like a New Year's dinner."

—James Toney

"Golota has baggage. He's a guy that likes to hit people in the testicles."

—Don King, on Andrew Golota, prior to Golota's fight with Chris Byrd on King's massive April fight card at Madison Square Garden

AL KRATZER'S VIEW



"THE BIBLE OF BOXING"

RATINGS ANALYSIS

POUND-FOR-POUND

1. ROY JONES
   Heavyweight/Light Heavyweight
2. BERNARD HOPKINS
   Middleweight
3. FLOYD MAYWEATHER
   Lightweight
4. OSCAR DE LA HOYA
   Junior Middleweight
5. MANNY PACQUIAO
   Featherweight
6. WINKY WRIGHT
   Junior Middleweight
7. ERIK MORALES
   Junior Lightweight
8. KOSTYA TSZYU
   Junior Welterweight
9. JAMES TONEY
   Heavyweight
10. ANTONIO TARVER
    Light Heavyweight

(For period ended April 7, 2004)

HEAVYWEIGHTS: David Tua (sixth last issue), who hasn't fought since March 29, 2003, exits due to inactivity. This bumps up everybody rated below him last issue, and makes room for Monte Barrett at number 10.

CRUISERWEIGHTS: Due to his intention to campaign as a heavyweight, Vassiliy Jirov (first last issue) is gone. His departure lifts everybody rated below him last issue up one spot and allows Pietro Aurino to return at number 10.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS: Fabrice Tiozzo is back at number eight, thanks to his victory over Silvio Branco, who slips from eighth to ninth. Inactive Montell Griffin (ninth last issue) departs.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS: The retired Sven Ottke (second last issue) exits, pushing up everybody rated below him last issue. Mikkel Kessler debuts at number 10.

MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Jermain Taylor advances from sixth to fifth following his kayo of Alex Bunema, trading places with Sergey Tatevosyan (fifth last issue).

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Winky Wright (second last issue) replaces Shane Mosley as world champion. Mosley is demoted to Wright's former position.

WELTERWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS: No changes.

LIGHTWEIGHTS: Recent results cause a readjustment among the lower half of the rankings: Julio Diaz returns at number six after stopping Courtney Burton (sixth last issue). Burton falls to number 10, pushing out Victoriano Sosa. Alex Trujillo (ninth last issue) also departs following his loss to Emanuel Augustus at 140 pounds. Trujillo is replaced by the streaking Juan Diaz.

World champion Floyd Mayweather will most likely abandon the 135-pound class if he's successful in his upcoming bout with DeMarcus Corley at 140. If that's the case, THE RING will recognize the winner of the June 5 bout between number-one ranked Juan Lazcano and number-two contender Jose Luis Castillo as the new world lightweight champion.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS: Cassius Baloyi, who had been dropped for inactivity, recently returned to action with a win and has been reinstalled at number 10. This forces out Mike Anchondo (10th last issue).

FEATHERWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS: Israel Vazquez (fifth last issue) jumps to number two on the strength of his kayo of Jose Luis Valbuena, who falls from fourth to fifth. Vazquez' advancement pushes down Mahyar Monshipour (second last issue) and Joan Guzman (third last issue) one rung each.

Meanwhile, champion Paulie Ayala and his management have informed THE RING that if his next bout is at the featherweight limit, he will relinquish the 122-pound RING belt.

BANTAMWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS: Former flyweight titleholder Eric Morel is now ranked 10th at 115 pounds following his victory over Jesus Rojas. Morel's entry forces out Katsushige Kawashima (10th last issue).

FLYWEIGHTS: Morel (fourth last issue) departs for the junior bantam division. Also gone due to the fact they are now fighting at a higher weight are Malcolm Tunacao (sixth last issue) and Peter Culshaw (seventh last issue). The trio of departures allows Omar Narvaez (eighth last issue) to rise to number five, Vic Darchinyan (ninth last issue) to sixth, and Brahim Asloum (10th last issue) to seventh. Newly aboard are Hussein Hussein at eight, Luis Maldonado at nine, and Takefumi Sakata at 10.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS: Nelson Dieppa advances from fifth to fourth after knocking out eighth-ranked Kermin Guardia. Dieppa's rise forces Pichit Siriwat from fourth to fifth. Yosam Choi (ninth last issue) is gone following his loss to Federico Katubai, as is Mhikiza Myekeni (seventh last issue), who has been inactive. The realignment allows Fahlan Sakkreerin to move from 10th to seventh. Debuting are Ulises Solis at ninth and Roberto Vasquez at 10.

STRAWWEIGHTS: Ivan Calderon leaps from 10th to sixth following his kayo of Edgar Cardenas, which shoves down Juan Landaeta (sixth last issue) and Chana Porpaoin (seventh last issue) one spot each. Keitaro Hoshino (eighth last issue) exits after losing three in a row, while Muhammad Rachman debuts at number 10.

POUND-FOR-POUND: Wright's convincing decision over Shane Mosley (third last issue) prompts Mosley's exit, while Wright debuts at number six. Mosley's demise also bumps up Floyd Mayweather (fifth last issue) to third and Manny Pacquiao (sixth last issue) to fifth. ■

THE RING RATINGS

For Period Ended April 7, 2004

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by THE RING are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled in one of two ways: by unifying all three alphabet titles in a division; or by winning a box-off between THE RING'S number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

Ratings By The Editors

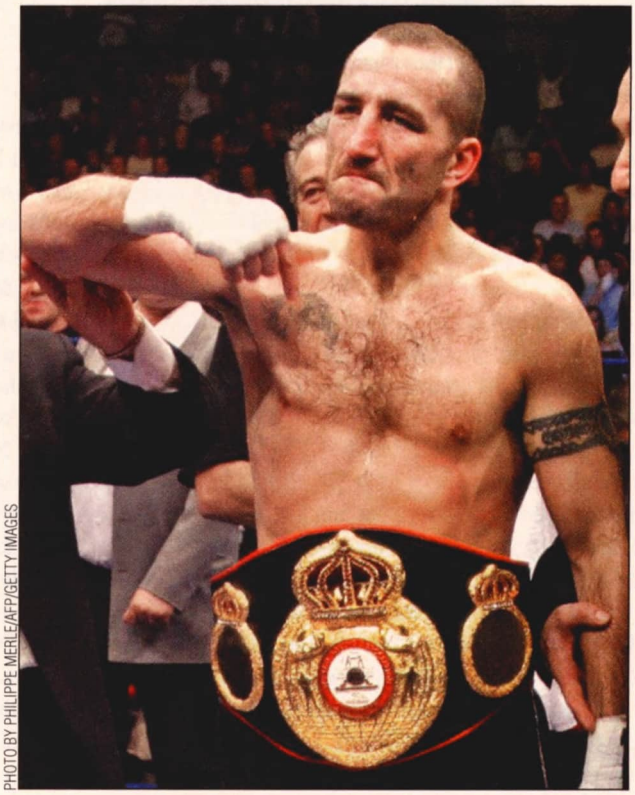


PHOTO BY PHILIPPE MERLE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Fabrice Tiozzo returned to the light heavyweight rankings after defeating Silvio Branco

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight Unlimited

Champ: Vacant

1. **VITALI KLITSCHKO** Ukraine 33-2 (32)
2. **CHRIS BYRD** Flint, MI 37-2 (20)
3. **CORRIE SANDERS** South Africa 39-2 (29)
4. **ROY JONES** Pensacola, FL 49-1 (38)
5. **JAMES TONEY** Ann Arbor, MI 67-4-2 (43)
6. **JOHN RUIZ** Methuen, MA 39-5-1 (27)
7. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO** Ukraine 42-2 (39)
8. **FRES OQUENDO** Puerto Rico 24-2 (15)
9. **HASIM RAHMAN** Baltimore, MD 36-5-1 (29)
10. **MONTE BARRETT** Queens, NY 30-3 (16)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: WINKY WRIGHT St. Petersburg, FL 47-3 (25)

1. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA** Los Angeles, CA 36-3 (29)
2. **SHANE MOSLEY** Pomona, CA 39-3 (35)
3. **FERNANDO VARGAS** Oxnard, CA 24-2 (22)
4. **KASSIM OUMA** W. Palm Beach, FL 19-1-1 (13)
5. **VERNO PHILLIPS** Aurora, CO 37-9-1 (19)
6. **JAVIER CASTILLEJO** Spain 56-5 (38)
7. **DANIEL SANTOS** Puerto Rico 27-2-1 (20)
8. **TRAVIS SIMMS** Norwalk, CT 23-0 (18)
9. **J.C. CANDELO** Colombia 27-6-3 (19)
10. **BRONCO McKART** Monroe, MI 46-5 (30)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: MANNY PACQUIAO Philippines 38-2-1 (29)

1. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ** Mexico 42-2 (33)
2. **MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA** Mexico 57-4 (40)
3. **SCOTT HARRISON** Scotland 21-2-1 (11)
4. **MANUEL MEDINA** Mexico 62-14 (28)
5. **DERRICK GAINER** Pensacola, FL 39-6-1 (24)
6. **INJIN CHI** South Korea 27-2-1 (16)
7. **MICHAEL BRODIE** England 35-1-1 (23)
8. **WILLIAM ABELYAN** Glendale, CA 23-4-1 (12)
9. **ROCKY JUAREZ** Houston, TX 19-0 (14)
10. **ZAHIR RAHEEM** Tulsa, OK 24-0 (14)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: PAULIE AYALA Ft. Worth, TX 35-2 (12)

1. **OSCAR LARIOS** Mexico 51-3-1 (35)
2. **ISRAEL VAZQUEZ** Mexico 36-3 (27)
3. **MAHYAR MONSHIPOUR** France 24-2-2 (15)
4. **JOAN GUZMAN** Dominican Republic 21-0 (17)
5. **JOSE LUIS VALBUENA** Venezuela 23-3-1 (13)
6. **SALIM MEDJKOUNE** France 43-4-1 (21)
7. **OSAMU SATO** Japan 27-2-3 (16)
8. **YODDAMRONG SITHYODTHONG** Thailand 35-1-1 (19)
9. **NEDAL HUSSEIN** Australia 32-1 (19)
10. **JORGE LACIERVA** Mexico 24-5-4 (16)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **RAFAEL MARQUEZ** Mexico 31-3 (28)
2. **VEERAPOL SAHAPROM** Thailand 42-1-2 (29)
3. **CRUZ CARBAJAL** Mexico 24-11-1 (20)
4. **JOHNNY BREDAHL** Denmark 55-2 (26)
5. **GENARO GARCIA** Mexico 30-4 (18)
6. **TOSHIAKI NISHIOKA** Japan 23-4-3 (14)
7. **SILENCE MABUZA** South Africa 15-0 (14)
8. **HERIBERTO RUIZ** Mexico 29-2-2 (13)
9. **RICARDO VARGAS** Mexico 36-9-3 (11)
10. **MAURICIO MARTINEZ** Panama 24-5-1 (17)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 200 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **WAYNE BRAITHWAITE**
   Guyana 20-0 (17)
2. **JEAN-MARC MORMECK**
   France 29-2 (21)
3. **JOHNNY NELSON**
   England 43-12-2 (28)
4. **O'NEIL BELL**
   Atlanta, GA 22-1-1 (21)
5. **EZRA SELLERS**
   Washington, D.C. 26-5 (24)
6. **CARL THOMPSON**
   England 32-6 (24)
7. **SEBASTIAN ROTHMAN**
   South Africa 17-2-2 (12)
8. **VIRGIL HILL**
   Bismarck, ND 49-4 (23)
9. **DALE BROWN**
   Canada 30-3-1 (20)
10. **PIETRO AURINO**
    Italy 27-2 (12)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: ROY JONES
Pensacola, FL 49-1 (38)

1. **ANTONIO TARVER**
   Orlando, FL 21-2 (17)
2. **ZSOLT ERDEI**
   Hungary 19-0 (13)
3. **GLENCOFFE JOHNSON**
   Miami, FL 40-9-2 (27)
4. **JULIO GONZALEZ**
   Huntington Beach, CA 35-2 (22)
5. **DARIUSZ MICHALCZEWSKI**
   Germany 48-1 (38)
6. **ERIC HARDING**
   Philadelphia, PA 21-3-1 (7)
7. **CLINTON WOODS**
   England 35-3-1 (21)
8. **FABRICE TIOZZO**
   Franco 46-2 (30)
9. **SILVIO BRANCO**
   Italy 49-7-2 (30)
10. **RICHARD HALL**
    Winter Haven, FL 27-4 (25)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **JOE CALZAGHE**
   Wales 37-0 (30)
2. **ANTHONY MUNDINE**
   Australia 20-1 (15)
3. **ANTWUN ECHOLS**
   Davenport, IA 29-5-1 (26)
4. **DANNY GREEN**
   Australia 18-1 (17)
5. **BYRON MITCHELL**
   Ozark, AL 25-3-1 (18)
6. **MARKUS BEYER**
   Germany 29-1 (11)
7. **CHARLES BREWER**
   Philadelphia, PA 40-9 (28)
8. **MADS LARSEN**
   Denmark 45-2 (37)
9. **ROBIN REID**
   England 36-4-1 (27)
10. **MIKKEL KESSLER**
    Denmark 33-0 (25)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: BERNARD HOPKINS
Philadelphia, PA 43-2-1 (31)

1. **HOWARD EASTMAN**
   England 39-1 (35)
2. **ROBERT ALLEN**
   Atlanta, GA 36-4 (27)
3. **RODNEY JONES**
   Lafayette, LA 31-3 (20)
4. **WILLIAM JOPPY**
   Washington, D.C. 34-3-1 (25)
5. **JERMAIN TAYLOR**
   Little Rock, AR 20-0 (15)
6. **SERGEY TATEVOSYAN**
   Russia 19-4 (13)
7. **EVANS OURE ASHIRA**
   Denmark 23-0 (13)
8. **FELIX STURM**
   Germany 20-0 (9)
9. **KINGSLEY IKEKE**
   Canada 18-1 (10)
10. **RAYMOND JOVAL**
    Netherlands 32-2 (14)

WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: CORY SPINKS
St. Louis, MO 32-2 (11)

1. **RICARDO MAYORGA**
   Nicaragua 25-4-1 (22)
2. **ANTONIO MARGARITO**
   Mexico 30-3 (21)
3. **VERNON FORREST**
   Atlanta, GA 35-2 (26)
4. **THOMAS DAMGAARD**
   Denmark 34-0 (26)
5. **MICHELE PICCIRILLO**
   Italy 41-2 (25)
6. **MANUEL GOMEZ**
   Mexico 25-10 (18)
7. **TEDDY REID**
   Adelphi, MD 22-5-1 (16)
8. **JAWAID KHALIQ**
   England 23-1-1 (13)
9. **JOSE RIVERA**
   Worcester, MA 37-3-1 (24)
10. **CARLOS BALDOMIR**
    Argentina 40-9-6 (12)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: KOSTYA TSZYU
Australia 30-1 (24)

1. **SHARMBA MITCHELL**
   Washington, D.C. 54-3 (30)
2. **ZAB JUDAH**
   Brooklyn, NY 30-1 (22)
3. **ARTURO GATTI**
   Jersey City, NJ 37-6 (28)
4. **VIVIAN HARRIS**
   Brooklyn, NY 23-1-1 (16)
5. **RICKY HATTON**
   England 35-0 (26)
6. **DeMARCUS CORLEY**
   Washington, D.C. 28-2-1 (16)
7. **OKTAY URKAL**
   Germany 34-1 (10)
8. **LOVEMORE NDOU**
   Australia 37-6-1 (23)
9. **MIGUEL COTTO**
   Puerto Rico 19-0 (16)
10. **JUNIOR WITTER**
    England 27-1-2 (16)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: FLOYD MAYWEATHER
Grand Rapids, MI 31-0 (21)

1. **JUAN LAZCANO**
   El Paso, TX 33-2-1 (25)
2. **JOSE LUIS CASTILLO**
   Mexico 49-6-1 (45)
3. **STEVE JOHNSTON**
   Denver, CO 35-3-1 (17)
4. **ACELINO FREITAS**
   Brazil 35-0 (31)
5. **JAVIER JAUREGUI**
   Mexico 47-10-2 (34)
6. **JULIO DIAZ**
   Coachella, CA 29-2 (22)
7. **ARTUR GRIGORIAN**
   Uzbekistan 36-1 (22)
8. **JULIEN LORCY**
   France 56-3-2 (41)
9. **JUAN DIAZ**
   Houston, TX 23-0 (11)
10. **COURTNEY BURTON**
    Benton Harbor, MI 20-2 (11)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **DIEGO CORRALES**
   Sacramento, CA 38-2 (31)
2. **JOEL CASAMAYOR**
   Miami, FL 30-2 (19)
3. **ERIK MORALES**
   Mexico 46-1 (34)
4. **JESUS CHAVEZ**
   Mexico 40-3 (28)
5. **CARLOS HERNANDEZ**
   Bellflower, CA 40-3-1 (24)
6. **STEVE FORBES**
   Las Vegas, NV 23-2 (6)
7. **YODSANAN NANTHACHAI**
   Thailand 42-2-1 (35)
8. **JORGE BARRIOS**
   Argentina 40-2-1 (29)
9. **ORLANDO SALIDO**
   Mexico 20-8-1 (13)
10. **CASSIUS BALOYI**
    South Africa 29-1 (16)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MASAMORI TOKUYAMA**
   North Korea 30-2-1 (8)
2. **MARK JOHNSON**
   Washington, D.C. 43-3 (28)
3. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
   Venezuela 25-0 (24)
4. **LUIS PEREZ**
   Nicaragua 22-1 (14)
5. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
   Mexico 27-1-1 (21)
6. **MARTIN CASTILLO**
   Mexico 25-1 (15)
7. **FELIX MACHADO**
   Venezuela 22-5-1 (11)
8. **MAURICIO PASTRANA**
   Colombia 31-4-1 (21)
9. **JOSE NAVARRO**
   Los Angeles, CA 19-0 (7)
10. **ERIC MOREL**
    Madison, WI 34-1 (18)

FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**
   Thailand 50-2 (26)
2. **LORENZO PARRA**
   Venezuela 22-0 (17)
3. **IRENE PACHECO**
   Colombia 28-0 (21)
4. **MZUKISI SIKALI**
   South Africa 28-4-2 (17)
5. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
   Argentina 16-0-2 (10)
6. **VIC DARCHINYAN**
   Australia 20-0 (15)
7. **BRAHIM ASLOUM**
   France 14-0 (6)
8. **HUSSEIN HUSSEIN**
   Australia 24-1 (18)
9. **LUIS MALDONADO**
   Mexico 27-0 (20)
10. **TAKEFUMI SAKATA**
    Japan 22-1-1 (9)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: ROSENDO ALVAREZ
Nicaragua 32-2-2 (21)

1. **JORGE ARCE**
   Mexico 35-3-1 (26)
2. **BEIBIS MENDOZA**
   Colombia 29-2 (23)
3. **VICTOR BURGOS**
   Mexico 36-13-3 (21)
4. **NELSON DIEPPA**
   Puerto Rico 20-2-2 (12)
5. **PICHIT SIRIWAT**
   Thailand 28-2 (13)
6. **MELCHOR COB-CASTRO**
   Mexico 66-9-4 (30)
7. **FAHLAN SAKKREERIN**
   Thailand 50-3-2 (20)
8. **KERMIN GUARDIA**
   Colombia 35-3 (21)
9. **ULISES SOLIS**
   Mexico 13-0 (9)
10. **ROBERTO VASQUEZ**
    Panama 14-1 (12)

STRAWWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **NOEL ARAMBULET**
   Venezuela 20-2-1 (10)
2. **EAGLE AKAKURA**
   Japan 12-0 (5)
3. **DANIEL REYES**
   Colombia 33-1-1 (28)
4. **JOSE AGUIRRE**
   Mexico 30-2-1 (19)
5. **YUTAKA NIIDA**
   Japan 15-1-3 (8)
6. **IVAN CALDERON**
   Puerto Rico 19-0 (3)
7. **JUAN LANDAETA**
   Venezuela 15-2 (13)
8. **CHANA PORPAOIN**
   Thailand 50-2-2 (17)
9. **ROBERTO LEYVA**
   Mexico 22-2-1 (19)
10. **MUHAMMAD RACHMAN**
    Indonesia 48-7-3 (21)

RYAN OUT LOUD

By Jeff Ryan

FIGHT FOR YOUR WRIGHT

Allow me to join all of the journalists, TV executives, and ticket-buyers who've recently turned themselves in to the authorities, thrown jackets over their heads to hide their faces as they've been led out of central booking, and subsequently pled guilty to the bias crime of treating Winky Wright like a second-class citizen. Too many of us narrow-minded nitwits, we're now willing to admit, never could tell wrong from Wright.

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

Wright is finally reaping the rewards of all his hard work

Of course you were rooting for Sugar Shane Mosley to bend Winky like a Slinky on March 13 so that you didn't have to live with the knowledge that the first man to unify the junior middleweight alphabet title in 29 years is a craftsman who relies on his feet as much as his fists, utilizes more angles than a Stephen King novel, and gets into multi-knockdown slugfests about as often as Courtney Love gets hailed as a role model. Face it: You didn't want Wright's kind hanging around, let alone becoming a major player, in the gated community of 147-160 pounds, where only exciting stars are supposed to reside.

The problem is that while we were all acting like doormen manning the velvet rope during the heyday of Studio 54, we were unjustly trying to deny entry to a guy who truly deserved to rub shoulders with the pretty people and reap some rewards for his labor—no matter how sleep-inducing that labor could be at times in the past. The Winker, we should have realized long before he routed Mosley, isn't your average stinker.

Wright should have received more respect because he played the game the way he had to for 14 years without griping, getting discouraged, or giving in to the critics by changing his style or battle plans. That meant having to go as far away as Luxemburg, France, Germany, Monaco, England, Argentina, and South Africa for fights, shrugging off getting jobbed against marquee favorite Fernando Vargas five years ago, making four IBF title defenses that got about as much mainstream attention as pro volleyball, and reaching deep inside himself to come up with the best performance of his career at the age of 32.

Through it all, Wright has remained a genuine nice guy to the media, to the public at large, and even to his opponents. (After accidentally elbowing Mosley during their showdown, Wright promptly apologized, to the dismay of a corner that wanted more killer instinct and fewer manners.) Wright lives in a modest house in St. Petersburg, Florida, with his daughter, son, and girlfriend. He has no criminal court dates or rehab stays pending, he doesn't abuse anything except a speedbag, and he doesn't say the

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Mosley simply couldn't solve Winky's slick southpaw style

kinds of stupid things that help give boxing its low-rent reputation.

"I deserved it; it's been a long time," he said of his undisputed crown after he beat Mosley by six points on two scorecards and four points on a third. Wright seemed genuinely relieved to have reached such a plateau after spending almost half of his life in the pro game. And you have to wonder how many times during those lonely early morning runs he'd stared into the distance and wondered if it would ever be worthwhile, if perhaps his troublesome style and inability to sell tickets might forever prevent him from getting a crack at one of the superstars.

"I felt I was a better overall fighter," Wright added. "I felt stronger than him in the fight. It was a matter of catching up to him."

Wright hasn't just caught up to Mosley; he's now surpassed him. It's now Wright who's being mentioned as the first big-name foe (imagine that, Wright considered a big name) for an un-retiring Felix Trinidad. Nice opportunity—unless Wright throws Mosley another beating first. Or gives Vargas a return bout. Or looks in the direction of Travis Simms. Or fulfills a mandatory obligation against Javier Castillejo (WBC) or Kassim Ouma (IBF). Funny, isn't it, how a guy nobody has been anxious to fight for much of his career is suddenly on everybody's speed dial? Wright has even talked about squaring off with Oscar De La Hoya or Bernard Hopkins. And it's safe to say that neither "The Golden Boy" nor "The Executioner," who both prefer to pick apart onrushing brawlers rather than outbox troublesome cuties, aren't ecstatic about that.

This should be a real feel-good story, except that in the world of sports in 2004, you don't find too many of those. Not even when a 3-1 underdog slaps around a three-division titleholder and two-time conqueror of De La Hoya. Last year, Mosley was called to testify about his relationship with BALCO during a federal investigation of the company that has been accused of producing the steroid, THG, a substance that is undetectable in conventional steroid testing. Naturally, there were whispers that Mosley was on the juice when he outpointed De La Hoya last September.

After the loss to Wright, Mosley said, "I felt like I was dehydrated and I couldn't move. I felt like I had a monkey on my back." Those comments, combined with Mosley's lack of strength on the inside and the belief of some observers that he appeared to have lost muscle, led to much postfight speculation that Mosley had used steroids previously but had given them up prior to this fight, and that Wright had merely taken advantage of a weakened warrior.

Well, guess what. It doesn't matter what Mosley did or didn't take as part of his preparation. He wasn't beating Wright on that night, no matter what. Wright had waited years for his opportunity, he was at his mental and physical peak, and he executed a perfect game plan of working off the jab, sneaking in combinations from unexpected angles, then escaping. He was aggressive when he had to be, cautious at the right moments, and never slowed or distracted by Mosley's trademark bodypunches.

For Mosley, the defeat was particularly costly. It ruined a $10-million payday for a shootout with Trinidad, a bout to which both parties had already agreed. Looking ahead to "Tito" was Mosley's first mistake. Allowing Wright to dictate the pace, punching range, and floor plan was his second one. Now, with the biggest win of his career under his three belts, and his having shown that he can be aggressive when he wants to be, the idea of Wright squaring off with the rest of the best of the 154-pound ranks seems far more intriguing than it ever did before.

From "stinker" to champagne-flute clinker. On March 13, the southpaw with the silly nickname made fans out of many of us. So from this day forward, if loving Wright is wrong, I don't want to be right. ■

CAMERA CLICKS

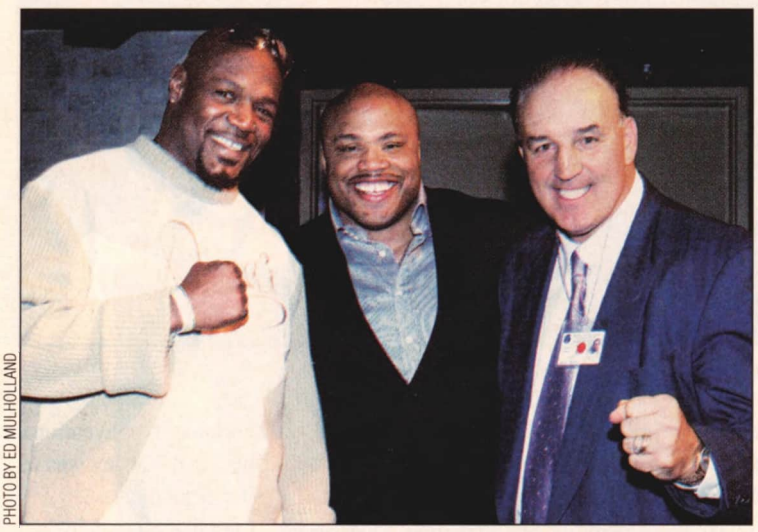


PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

If it's lonely at the top, then this photo illustrates that it's not as lonely in the middle. Clifford Etienne, Jameel McCline, and Gerry Cooney, three heavyweights who were all viewed as serious contenders at one time but didn't quite make it over the hump, seemed to be chummy rather than lonely when they all met up recently.

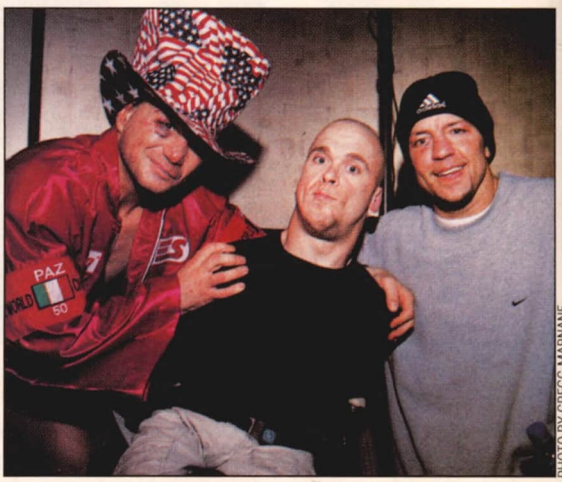


PHOTO BY GREGG MARNANE

After securing the 50th (and supposedly final) win of his career recently, Vinny Paz—along with victim number 50, Tocker Pudwill—took time out to pose with longtime Paz fan and friend Jason Pisano. Though Pisano has cerebral palsy that confines him to a wheelchair, he is closing in on an athletic goal of his own far more remarkable than Paz' 50 wins: Pisano has completed 28 marathons, and aims to race in a total of 50 of them before he's done.

PHOTO BY PHILIP BROWN

If you're looking for proof that they'll give awards to darned near anybody these days, look no farther than The Ring*'s European correspondent, Brian Doogan, who was named Specialist Correspondent of the Year in the British Sports Journalism awards for several boxing stories he penned for the newspaper* The Sunday Times*. Just kidding, Brian; the award was well-deserved. That's British champion jump jockey Tony McCoy presenting the award to Doogan.*

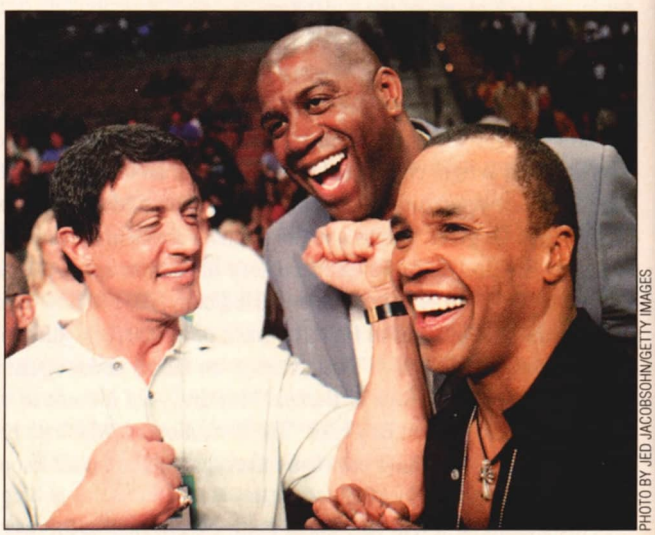


PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

This is Sylvester Stallone's response to basketball great Magic Johnson asking if he can try out for The Contender*. Stallone and Sugar Ray Leonard, partners in the upcoming NBC reality show, bumped into the former Los Angeles Laker at the Winky Wright-Shane Mosley fight in Las Vegas. Hopefully,* The Contender *will be a more successful television venture than* The Magic Hour *was.*

PHOTO COURTESY OF EVERLAST

Boxers often talk about taking other fighters into "deep waters," but they don't usually mean it literally. Heavyweight contender Jameel McCline, who uses swimming as part of his training regimen, and eight-time Olympic swimming medalist Gary Hall Jr., who uses boxing in his training, are both spokesmen for Everlast, and here we're seeing them posing with Everlast Chairman and CEO George Horowitz before hitting the pool for a workout.

PHOTO BY TED LERNER

The predator and the editor: Fearsome featherweight champ Manny Pacquiao poses with The Ring Editor-in-Chief Nigel Collins after receiving his Ring championship belt in March. Collins flew to Manila to present the prestigious belt, and you'll be able to read the in-depth story of Collins' trip in the next issue of The Ring Extra, on sale June 22.

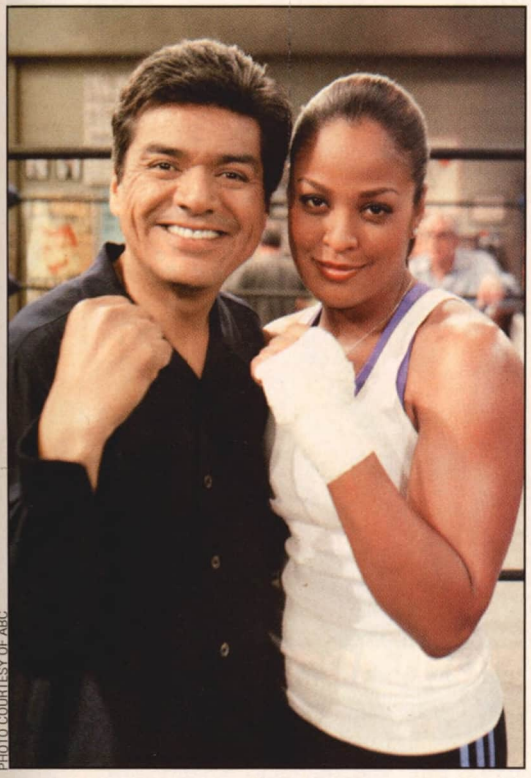


PHOTO COURTESY OF ABC

We knew she was never going to appear on the sitcom Frasier *(regardless of the spelling), but Laila Ali isn't averse to guest-starring on other sitcoms. She recently played a gym owner on an episode of* The George Lopez Show *and posed for pictures afterward with the show's star.*

NOSTALGIA CORNER

Every boxer has a different way of "tuning up"—and for two-time beltholder Mark Breland, it was conducting a musical ensemble at the Juilliard School of Music. The Olympic gold medalist donned a tux (and some gloves) just prior to his welterweight title defense against Lloyd Honeyghan on ABC in 1990, and the tuneup didn't hurt him, as he went on to stop Honeyghan in three rounds.

NEW FACES

MIKE ANCHONDO

Junior Lightweight

By Joe Santoliquito

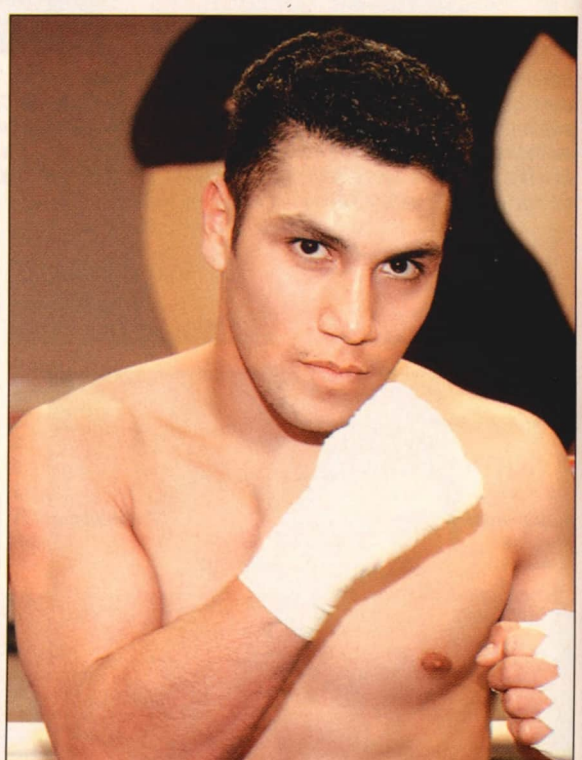


PHOTO BY CARLOS BAEZA

The grandfather knew the ring was just the place to harness his grandson's rage. Fred Anchondo figured he had to do something. After all, he saw anger consume too many young men the same way: first juvenile hall, then running with a gang, possibly selling drugs, perhaps doing something worse. Then doing hard time behind bars until they were in their mid-30s, coming out with no marketable skills, no future.

That wasn't going to happen to his grandson Mike. No way. Fred was willing to go as far as taking his own daughter to court for custody of young Mike and the rest of his grandchildren. He was willing to go as far as slapping a pair of boxing gloves on the little boy who had trouble finding the proper release for his rage.

Through time, Mike Anchondo has learned to mold his childhood temper into the foundation of a very successful boxing career. The 21-year-old junior lightweight from La Puente, California, is one of the many bright young lights in Oscar De La Hoya's burgeoning Golden Boy Promotions.

Anchondo, 23-0 (18), made a huge step in his career ladder with a 10-round unanimous decision over veteran Goyo Vargas in December 2003. His pro success follows a notable amateur career that was highlighted by a pair of victories over Francisco "Panchito" Bojado.

Through it all, right there by Anchondo's side, was the man "Mighty Mike" credits with saving his life.

"I was the kind of kid that if trouble wasn't there, I was going to make trouble,"

(Continued on page 55)

PRO RECORD

2000		
May 6	Ramon Ortiz, Indio, CA	KO 4
June 22	Victor Guerrero, Anaheim, CA	KO 3
Aug. 4	Ramon Gomez, Montebello, CA	KO 1
Aug. 27	Victor Barreto, Del Mar, CA	KO 2
Sept. 21	Juan Colin, Irvine	KO 2
Oct. 27	Luis Martinez, Montebello	KO 3
Nov. 16	Arturo Flores, Irvine	KO 1
Dec. 18	Martin Llamas, Los Angeles	KO 3
2001		
Jan. 18	Osvaldo Valenzuela, Anaheim	KO 2
Feb. 18	Enrique Valenzuela, El Centro, CA	KO 3
April 26	Juan Carlos Aranday, Irvine	W 7
June 3	Roberto Romero, San Jacinto, CA	KO 1
July 15	Juan Carlos Martinez, San Jacinto	KO 1
Oct. 14	Juan Pablo Garcia, San Jacinto	KO 1
Nov. 18	Alejandro Ramirez, San Jacinto	W 6
Dec. 15	Alejandro Ramirez, San Jacinto	KO 4
2002		
May 23	Manuel Bocanegra, San Jose, CA	KO 3
Aug. 17	Ever Beleno, San Jacinto	W 10
Nov. 21	Isidro Tejedor, San Jose	KO 2
2003		
Jan. 16	Angel Rios, Los Angeles	W 10
April 17	Roque Cassiani, Los Angeles	KO 10
Sept. 18	Silverio Ortiz-Ley, Santa Ana, CA	KO 4
Dec. 11	Goyo Vargas, Los Angeles	W 10

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
23	23	0	0	18

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SQUEEZED OUT

Is There A Superfight Out There For Trinidad?

By David Mayo

Postfight bravado in the immediate aftermath of witnessing an eight-figure payday fly Wright out the window certainly should receive a Winky-and-nod reaction. Felix Trinidad didn't show up at Mandalay Bay in March to see his megafight against Shane Mosley decimated by Winky Wright, that's for sure. And when he subsequently declared himself fit to end a two-year layoff by fighting the newly ordained undisputed junior middleweight champion forthwith, healthy skepticism was the appropriate response.

Trinidad had ample opportunity to pursue a fight with Wright back when he was on top of the boxing world, and spurned it. That could have been because of Wright's style, or inferior marketability, or both. In any case, Trinidad and his motley band of bigbucks, turn-of-the-century warriors in the 147-through-160 range—Mosley, Oscar De La Hoya, Fernando Vargas, Vernon Forrest, even Bernard Hopkins—never outwardly hankered for a tussle with Wright, at least not until

Felix Trinidad and Don King are back together again following "Tito's" two-year retirement. His return to action has generated excitement among fans, but obtaining a marquee match for the Puerto Rican icon has been more troublesome than originally expected.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

The last thing Trinidad wanted to see at the Mandalay Bay on March 13 was Winky Wright beating up Shane Mosley to take the junior middleweight title. Trinidad had planned to fight Mosley, but the match fell apart when Wright upset Sugar Shane via unanimous decision. A Trinidad-Wright bout is a possibility, but isn't as attractive as Trinidad-Mosley would have been.

March 13, when Mosley got manhandled in a 12-round decision and demonstrated exactly why the megastars employed their substantial evasive abilities to keep Wright on the outside.

Mosley broke the pact. The alphabet titles apparently offered just too much allure. Or maybe Mosley really thought that Wright was wrong, that although he himself is a blown-up lightweight who got blown out twice at welterweight, he could really handle a slick, left-handed, starved-for-attention, top-shelf natural junior middleweight. So Mosley declined $12-million to fight De La Hoya, took $3-million to fight Wright, and the fight ended up with the wrong winner.

PHOTO BY DUANE LONG

According to HBO's Larry Merchant, a fight with Ricardo Mayorga (pictured) could be on tap for Trinidad, providing Mayorga beats minor 147-pound beltholder Jose Rivera in April. However, the fact that Trinidad wants to campaign at 160 might present a problem.

It all left Trinidad sitting ringside in Las Vegas, wondering exactly what to do next.

Trinidad's comeback announcement in January caught the boxing world by storm, but stormy is an apt description of how his still-sketchy return has evolved since then, in a month-by-month disintegration of the original plan for an immediate comeback against De La Hoya. By February, that fight was in jeopardy, as De La Hoya went off in pursuit of a late-spring tuneup for a September middleweight showdown with Hopkins, which could push Trinidad-De La Hoya II back to 2005, if it happens at all.

Trinidad and promoter Don King then trekked to Las Vegas in mid-March to trumpet their done-deal fight with Mosley, until Wright exploded the myth of Mosley as the world's dominant junior middleweight.

Trinidad talked the game. He applauded the clear-cut unanimous decision for Wright. He did a round of interviews where he stressed that Wright is on his radar, and that his first comeback fight will be one of major significance.

"I don't need tuneups," Trinidad said. "You're either ready to fight or you're not."

He appeared at the postfight press conference, where he playfully tried to pry one of the championship belts out of Wright's hands, though he also insisted he has no interest in fighting for any of those 154-pound straps, because he refuses to reduce to less than 160. That could be gamesmanship, or it could be Trinidad's coy manner of saying there are better options than Wright without admitting as much, but certainly there is plenty of sentiment that Wright hardly is the ideal comeback opponent.

HBO analyst Larry Merchant expressed doubts about Trinidad calling for an immediate comeback fight against Wright and an unwillingness to fight at less than the middleweight limit. Merchant's opinion is that Trinidad's ideal opponent and likely comeback target is former welterweight champion Ricardo Mayorga, assuming Mayorga wins a scheduled April 17 fight against Jose Antonio Rivera, probably at junior middleweight.

"Conventional wisdom is that Mayorga is the opponent of choice," Merchant said. "Trinidad would probably fight Wright, but that may be academic, because of the return clause in Mosley's contract with Wright. It's Mosley's choice, and I'm not sure what Mosley does from here if he doesn't take that option. It may simply be a matter of Mosley exercising his opportunity at career survival dictating that Trinidad doesn't fight Wright anytime soon."

Wright, 47-3 (25), spent 14 years and 50 professional fights yearning for the position he now finds himself in, although even he seemed to struggle to define his current position. He appreciated Trinidad's declaration of willingness to fight him, while harboring suspicions about the sincerity of it, spawned by too many years of being avoided by the power-hitters in and around his weight division.

PHOTO BY STEPHEN CHERNIN/GETTY IMAGES

Originally, Trinidad hoped for an immediate rematch with Oscar De La Hoya, but when negotiations broke down, "The Golden Boy" signed to fight Felix Sturm in June and then middleweight champion Bernard Hopkins in the fall—all of which makes a Trinidad-De La Hoya rematch a long shot, at best.

"They all wanted to keep the big fights among themselves, because I'm a smart, natural junior middleweight, and they knew that would be a disadvantage for them," Wright said. "Until Mosley, the only one who would fight me was Vargas. I let that fight slip away from me, and Vargas made it clear he wouldn't fight me again, so it took four years for me to get another big fight.

"It wasn't like it was a conspiracy or anything. It's just that they knew they had to keep the business end all to themselves, because once they let me in, it was going to be over, and they knew it. I have all the respect in the world for Mosley, because he took the fight when nobody else would. But Mosley's only big win at 154 was against De La Hoya. De La Hoya's only big win at 154 was against Vargas, and at that time, Vargas had been taking it slow after Trinidad knocked him out. I want to fight Trinidad, and now he says he wants to fight me. But they'll have to show me the money. I've only got a few fights left, then I'm gone. We'll find out how serious Trinidad is, and whether he's willing to take the same risk as Mosley."

In the meantime, Trinidad has some serious decisions pertaining to what direction will make his comeback worthwhile—and he doesn't necessarily hold the strongest hand.

Wright wants Trinidad. Trinidad says he wants Wright. But Mosley could have something to say about that too. Mosley said after the loss to Wright that he intends to take advantage of the rematch clause, but whether he would

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO

Another fight with Hopkins is always a possibility, but "The Executioner" gave Trinidad such a thorough beating the first time, it's unlikely Tito will want another dose of the Philadelphia tough guy.

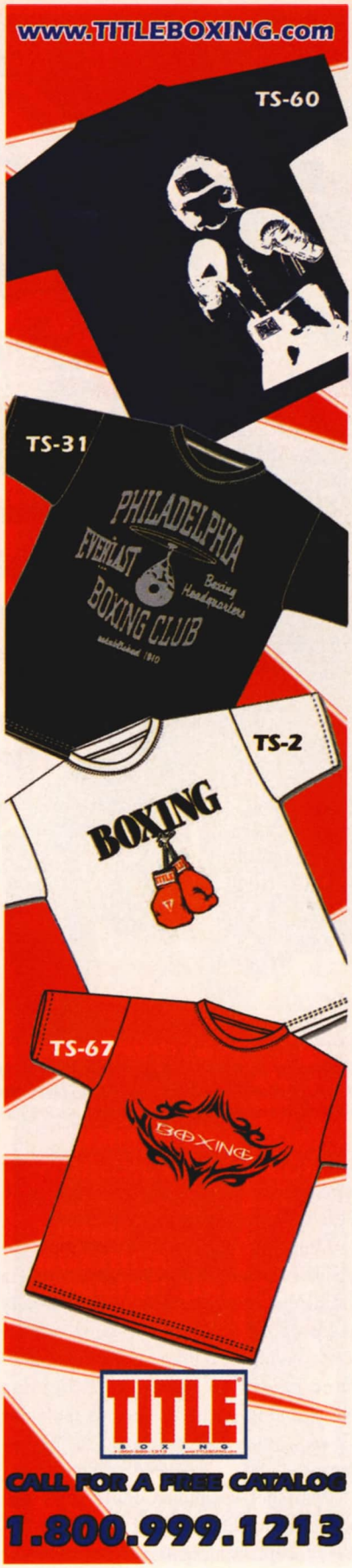


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Looking for as big a payday as possible, Wright is more than willing to fight Trinidad, but he's skeptical about the match happening. Until Mosley gave him a shot, most of the top men around his weight avoided southpaw Wright, including Trinidad.

do so after making a mistake under the same circumstances two years ago with Vernon Forrest remains in question.

Mandatory defenses will make it virtually impossible for Wright to retain the alphabet titles. The WBC already has ordered a defense against nondescript Javier Castillejo, and Wright indicated he has no intention of fighting run-of-the-mill challengers of the same ilk as so many he has faced in the last decade.

Alphabet vacancies could send Trinidad in pursuit of one of the title splinters, except fighting fringe opponents is not part of his stated comeback design either, and chasing meaningless 154-pound title fights would betray his insistence on a middleweight comeback only.

De La Hoya's pursuit of Hopkins and Mosley's loss to Wright have left Trinidad with two immediate comeback options: Fight a fine fighter from a flawed division, or a flawed fighter from a fine division.

Welterweights and junior middleweights offer more potential opponents and legitimate competition, though one can nit-pick every possible name. Middleweights offer the finest potential opponent of all, but Hopkins has cleaned out the division to the virtual exclusion of all others, and his destruction of Trinidad was overwhelming enough to question how a rematch would be any different.

All the big names at 147 pounds—Cory Spinks, Antonio Margarito, Mayorga, Forrest—could prove unworkable if Trinidad sticks to his guns and refuses to fight beneath the middleweight limit. Spinks would not hazard a 13-pound jump to middleweight, and if Trinidad is willing to fight a lefthander at 154, it might as well be Wright. Trinidad-Mayorga, matching a Puerto Rican against a Nicaraguan, would do enormous business and have broad-based international appeal, although Mayorga was exposed by Spinks. Margarito is a wild card, but his negligible name recognition makes an immediate Trinidad fight unlikely. Forrest, a two-time loser to Mayorga, is moving up to junior middleweight and had an April fight scheduled against Teddy Reid at press time. But like Wright, Forrest has a style that makes the risk greater than the reward for an established star like Trinidad.

Junior middleweights have a new kingpin in Wright, who won THE RING belt by beating Mosley. He is clear-cut and indisputable, though soon not to be undisputed, thanks to the predictable alphabet absurdities. Castillejo and Kassim Ouma are lined up for fights with Wright, who has no interest in them—and neither does Trinidad. De La Hoya is poised for a move to middleweight. Vargas is slow-tracking back into the title picture. And Mosley's loss suggested he is better off campaigning with the aforementioned group at 147 than with Trinidad at or about 160.

There are fewer marketable middleweights, in part because the finest of the group, Hopkins, has cleaned out the division. Robert Allen, Howard Eastman, William Joppy, and others of that ilk simply don't present enough intrigue to spark Trinidad's interest. Besides the Hopkins-De La Hoya winner, the only other standout name at middleweight is the up-and-coming Jermain Taylor, whom Trinidad has yet to mention as a potential opponent.

De La Hoya surely would enter a Hopkins fight as a decided underdog, yet remains the most strangely marketable non-heavyweight in boxing history, simply because his bottom line seems so completely unaffected by defeat. Even after his ridiculous run-and-hide tactics in the championship rounds cost him a 1999 decision against Trinidad, De La Hoya remained capable of commanding regular eight-figure paydays.

"Oscar already beat Trinidad once, he just didn't get the decision, and what his corner had him do the last few rounds was just stupid," trainer Floyd Mayweather Sr. said. "But Oscar had the formula to beat Trinidad even then, and that was before we started working together. The only fight Oscar ever legitimately lost was the first Mosley fight. Everyone but the judges saw how much better Oscar was the second time. It would be the same thing against Trinidad. Oscar would dominate the rematch. I still think that fight will happen, because I think Oscar has some more big fights left in him. I don't think 2004 is the end of the line for Oscar. It's just that he has some business he wants to do with Hopkins first."

Meanwhile, Trinidad waits. He says he wants Wright, but doesn't have first dibs. He says he wants the Hopkins-De La Hoya winner, but if he delays his comeback until that outcome is determined, then it opens the question of whether a comeback is worthwhile at all.

Trinidad's return is one of boxing's biggest stories. What structure it will take is not entirely his to determine. His 2004 comeback announcement, given the negotiational difficulties he already has encountered, may have been only slightly less premature than his 2002 retirement announcement. But promotional interest, network interest, and, above all, fan interest, demonstrate that "Tito's" return can be good for more than just the fighter. It could be good for boxing as a whole.

"Trinidad has some options besides Wright," Merchant said. "He can make a good deal of money for fighting Mayorga. In the meantime, he can let the smoke clear from Hopkins-De La Hoya and fight the winner of that fight. There are always some things to work around in making fights of this magnitude, but just by virtue of coming back, Trinidad immediately becomes part of that mix." ■

David Mayo covers boxing for the Grand Rapids (Michigan) Press and is a regular contributor to this magazine.

PHOTO BY STEVE MATTEO/HBO

Will we ever see this again? Trinidad celebrates following his fourth-round knockout of Hassine Cherifi on May 11, 2002, in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Shortly afterward, Tito unexpectedly announced his retirement at just 29 years of age.

From The "Future Rocky"

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

A NEW LOOK AT JOE MESI

To A Rocky Future

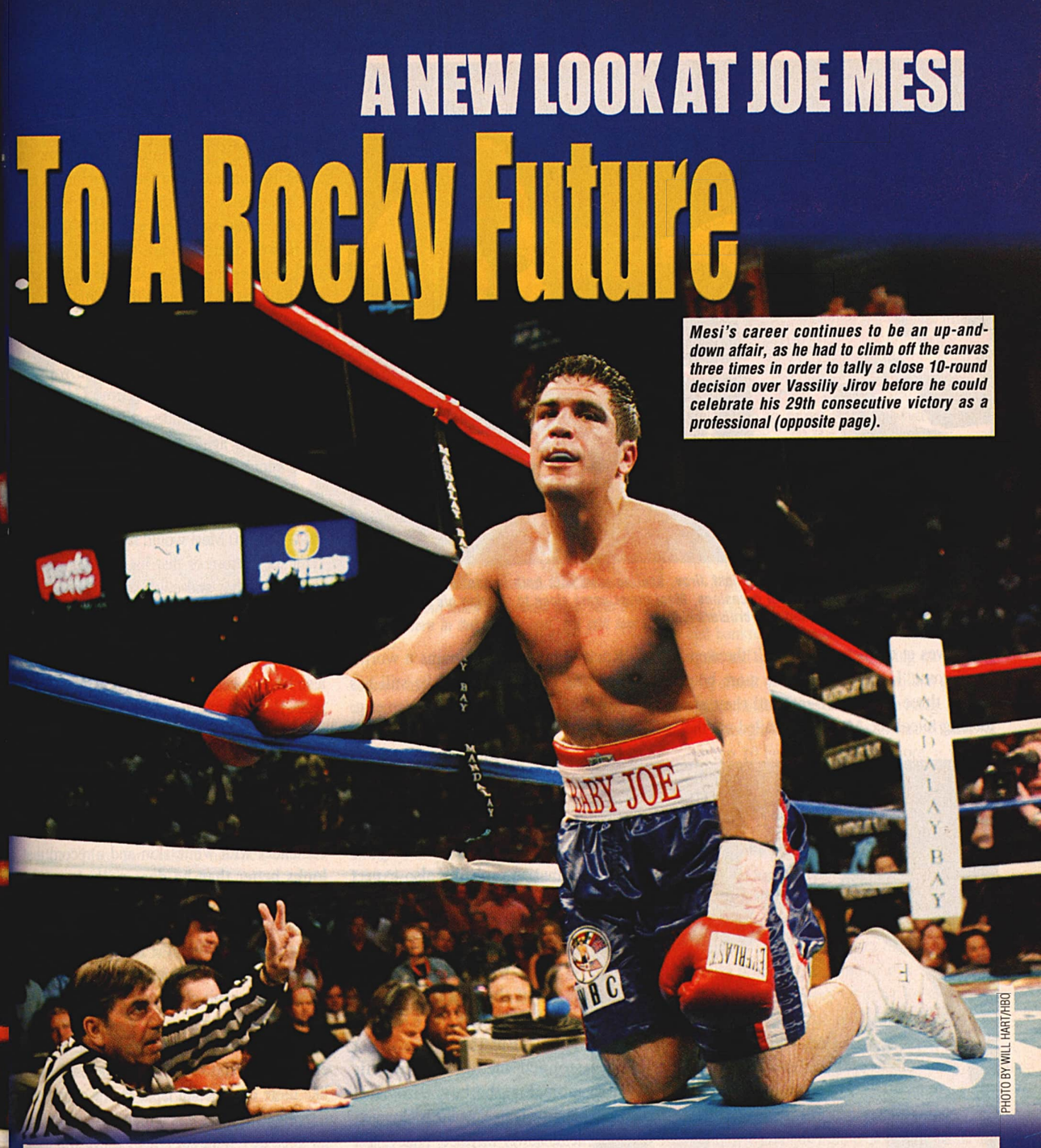


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Mesi's career continues to be an up-and-down affair, as he had to climb off the canvas three times in order to tally a close 10-round decision over Vassiliy Jirov before he could celebrate his 29th consecutive victory as a professional (opposite page).

By Ivan Goldman

At age 30, heavyweight "Baby" Joe Mesi's days as a prospect are numbered. He must move up or out. But after his demanding victory over tough Vassiliy Jirov, he still hasn't proved he can run with the big dogs up front.

Like the man he defeated, Mesi once again proved his grit, determination, and his power to excite fans. But like Jirov, he also showed serious flaws that make cracking the top 10 a long shot.

The fight's finish was eerily similar to Mesi's previous outing, against Monte Barrett. Again, winner Mesi was in far worse shape than his opponent. Had the 10-rounder with Jirov been a 12-rounder, Mesi would have been an almost certain loser.

Though he won on all three judges' cards by 94-93, Mesi was unsteady, off-balance, and dog tired, and kissed the canvas three times in the last two rounds. Though he managed to get by both Barrett and Jirov—by far the toughest opponents on his ledger—there remain much stiffer tests out there.

"It doesn't get any easier from here," said Xavier James, vice president of HBO Sports. In terms of opposition, "Mesi has to go uphill, not downhill," James said, meaning competitive fights against credible opponents.

Despite Mesi's two shaky outings,

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

"Baby Joe" built a big early lead against Jirov, scoring well with both hands. But although he shook his opponent on a couple of occasions, Mesi never came close to flooring his lighter rival, who had previously campaigned as a cruiserweight.

executives at the network weren't threatening divorce. He owes them one more bout on his three-fight contract, and they are looking to collect. Mesi, once hailed as "the new Rocky Marciano," remains a worthwhile boxing commodity, and he still has plenty of faithful fans, and he still comes to fight.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

An accidental clash of heads opened a cut over Jirov's right eye in the sixth round, but although it looked messy, the injury did not play a major role in the fight.

"The way to come back on our network," James said, "is by giving us a good fight. Give us a good fight and odds are you'll be back." James said never-say-die Jirov can probably also expect another invitation. "Like Arturo Gatti, he's always in a good fight," James said.

Jirov was in HBO's 2003 Fight of the Year, a cruiserweight contest with James Toney. But though he never stopped trying and had his moments, the busy Jirov lost decisively against the tricky, tireless, newly inspired Toney, just as he was through eight rounds against Mesi.

Jirov, a Kazakhstan native who now fights out of Phoenix, Arizona, stands little chance of matching charismatic Gatti in terms of popularity. But it wouldn't be impossible for him to become a sort of bleached heavyweight version of Ivan Robinson, a lightweight who sometimes won, sometimes lost, and always gave HBO's customers plenty of thrills for its money.

But exciting, formidable winners are more in demand than flawed winners and exciting losers. So there had to be some degree of frustration over at HBO, just as there was over at Team Mesi. Mesi, 29-0 (25), is an aggressive, intelligent fighter with a solid base of fans centered in the Buffalo, New York, area. He has quick hands and he can punch. But he's still not over the hump.

"Mesi's going to have trouble with the big guys," predicted longtime California matchmaker Jerry Bilderrain. "Try to picture him or Jirov against a guy like David Tua. He'd knock them both dead."

It's difficult to dispute that forecast. In fact, it's tough to find somebody in THE RING's top 10 Mesi would be favored to beat. Near the bottom of that list you find Hasim Rahman, a hot-and-cold, somewhat limited ex-champion. But to stand a chance against him, Mesi would need better conditioning and vastly improved mental toughness. He'd also have to keep his hands up. Among other feats, Rahman kayoed giant Lennox Lewis in their first match. Most top heavyweights, with the clear exception of Chris Byrd, hit harder than former cruiser Jirov, who'd moved up in weight to face Mesi.

Any heavyweight who's a borderline contender with white skin and a record that looks better than he does will always be known as a white hope. The only way to kill the pigmentation talk is in the ring. So Mesi remains saddled with the less-than-flattering appellation. And no matter how many fans he has, they can't climb into the ring to lend him a hand.

In Mesi's favor, the trouble he experienced at the end of the Jirov contest looked like more of a mental lapse than a conditioning problem. After a first round that went better for Jirov than for Mesi, Baby Joe took over and was mostly in command until his southpaw opponent caught him in the ninth round with a left to the body, right to the head combination, sending him to the canvas.

Mesi's promoter, Tony Holden, contended the second punch was "a clearly illegal blow behind the head." But Mesi wouldn't have been hit there had he been facing his opponent properly. And though the punch looked on the wrong side of legal, it didn't look intentionally illegal, so referee Jay

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Jirov hung tough and finally turned things around in the ninth round when he floored Mesi with a right hand. The former IBF cruiser king put Baby Joe down twice more in the final round, but still lost the decision when all three judges turned in 94-93 scores for Mesi.

Nady ruled it a clean knockdown.

Mesi, Holden said, had no memory of what transpired after the first knockdown. HBO's James called the back-of-the-head excuse "irrelevant. It is what it is. He clearly had a hard time the last couple rounds, and excuses won't help his cause any." James credited Mesi for making no such excuses and for his determination to move up in class. "He's not looking for creampuffs," James said.

Mesi, who weighed in at 227, was able to take Jirov's inside game away from him, forcing the 1996 Olympic champion to compete at a distance. That didn't work for Jirov until he caught the perhaps-too-confident Mesi for that first knockdown.

Before the fight, some thought Jirov, 29, might turn out to be the heavyweight who moves into contention. However, Jirov, 33-2 (29), has looked sloppy in recent outings, as though carried more by his spirit than his abilities. He's getting easier to hit and has shown resulting wear and tear in recent fights.

With Toney now competing at heavyweight, cruiserweight Jirov was stuck with an array of potential opponents who wouldn't help him draw the big money. So following the lead of so many other cruisers before him, he rolled the dice and stepped up in weight. His first heavyweight contest earned him a reported $300,000, which is the kind of purse cruiserweights rarely see. Mesi pulled in $450,000.

The crowd at the Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas was pumped up for an excellent doubleheader, with Winky Wright challenging junior middleweight champion Shane Mosley in the main event. It was the first Las Vegas outing for Mesi, who'd done most of his work around Buffalo.

Sure enough, round one started out with some serious action. Jirov seemed to carry his 212 pounds well. When he landed his first vicious bodypunch, Mesi came right back with a counter. This would be no easy night for either of them.

In round two, Mesi landed a couple of solid rights and slammed his opponent with an excellent right-left to the body, serving notice that if Jirov got inside, Mesi wasn't helpless. In round three, after another good right by Mesi, Jirov was keeping his distance and trying to work off the jab. They stunned each other in the fourth round, but Jirov was clearly sapped from staying in there with a bigger man. Mesi was throwing and landing more.

In round six, a clash of heads that was ruled accidental left Jirov with a cut over his right eye. By round nine, Mesi was getting a bit sloppy, and that's when Jirov put him down. After getting up and taking the mandatory eight-count, Mesi withstood Jirov's onslaught until the bell.

Between rounds, Mesi's father told him in the corner that he needed the last round. In hindsight, that was bad advice. As the round opened, Mesi, staying tough, drove Jirov into the ropes. But Jirov fired back with a couple of combinations, and an unsteady Mesi went down twice more before the final bell, making his last impression a bad one.

Afterward, Mesi admitted that Jirov hurt him, said he's still learning, and showed no inclination to return to easier fights. James said Mesi's people were still talking to Shelly Finkel about a possible showdown with enigmatic Mike Tyson. But particularly in the last few years, events proved that even when adviser Finkel promises Tyson, he can't always deliver him.

It isn't clear whether Tyson, 37, would ever return to the ring. Even after declaring his official bankruptcy, he showed no desire to fight again and appeared to be counting on winning a fat chunk of loot in his $100-million civil suit against his former promoter Don King.

Though Tyson isn't even ranked among the top 10 heavyweights anymore, a victory over him would likely mean something to the fans and could surely help erase the memory of Mesi's last two rounds with Jirov. The event itself would pull in the serious millions Mesi and every boxer looks for. Power-hitting Tyson remains a dangerous hombre, particularly in the early rounds.

Both would have plenty to lose, but Mesi would probably be more at risk. Iron Mike, milking the memory of what he once was, always seems capable of earning a purse of at least a few million—no matter how flawed he looked in his previous outing.

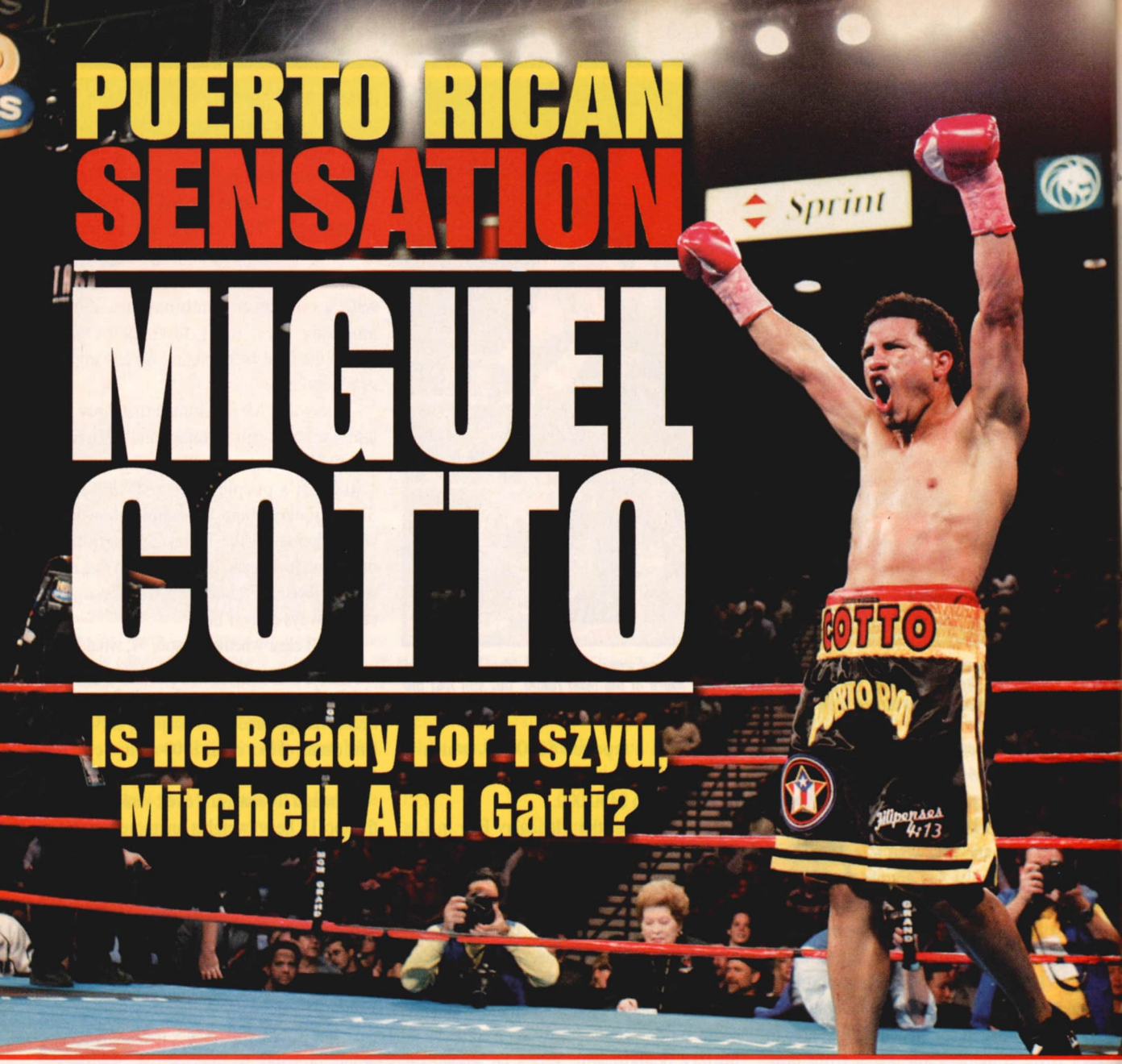
Mesi could go back to fighting stiffs in Buffalo, at least for a while. But that wouldn't give him the experience he needs. And he'd be getting older every day. He remains a tough competitor who will fight for his dignity. The odds favor his jumping right back into the circle of danger, still hoping to prove he's for real. And while nothing we've seen in his last two outings indicates he'll be successful, you have to give Mesi credit for taking the sort of risks many in his position would try to avoid. ■

Ivan Goldman is THE RING's West Coast correspondent.

PUERTO RICAN SENSATION

MIGUEL COTTO

Is He Ready For Tszyu, Mitchell, And Gatti?



Miguel Cotto celebrates his biggest victory to date, a brutal stoppage of veteran Victoriano Sosa. Cotto's dominating performance will force the junior welterweight division to look at the 2000 Puerto Rican Olympian much differently now.

By Joe Santoliquito

PHOTOS BY WILL HART/HBO

Look at the junior welterweight division. Peel away the title belts, glimmering records, and oft-cited reputation as boxing's deepest division, and take a *real* good look at the top 140-pounders in the world today. What do you really see?

There's a champion who may have one or two more quality fights left in him, hopefully before his aging body loses a limb during training. There's a top contender who looked very ordinary in a February keep-busy outing. There's an exciting guy who draws great TV ratings, but whose right hand now seems to crack as easily as the scar tissue around his eyes once did.

Now peer down the ratings a little farther, and you'll see someone who is generally considered the future of the division: Miguel Cotto. However, with the way the top fighters are seemingly losing their grip, Cotto may also now represent the division's present.

The Puerto Rican certainly made a case for himself by pounding veteran Victoriano Sosa on the undercard of the Erik Morales-Jesus Chavez show before more than 8,000 fans at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas on February 28. Cotto's fourth-round stoppage of Sosa erased the "prospect" tag that many still hung over his head and replaced it with the new label of "bona fide contender." In other words, reigning world junior welter champion Kostya Tszyu, hampered by injuries over the last year, waning contender Sharmba Mitchell, who struggled mightily against Lovemore Ndou in February, and exciting but brittle-handed Arturo Gatti all better watch out—because Cotto has arrived.

"All my fights are important, but the one against Sosa could be the one that defines my success," said Cotto, whose English has improved dramatically since hiring a personal tutor. "I feel I'm ready for everybody. I have to just wait and see what happens. We know that we're getting close to a world championship fight, and I want to clear up any doubts that my critics may have.

"Kostya Tszyu, Sharmba Mitchell, I think I'm ready for them, for that level. All of my career I thought I was ready for a world title. I would say especially the last eight months to a year I was thinking more and more that I was ready for a title fight. Kostya Tszyu, Sharmba Mitchell, all of the champions at 140 pounds. I'm ready. This is the correct time for me."

Despite his confidence, Cotto is very grounded. He's working toward a bachelor's degree in physical education at the University Turabo, located in Cotto's native Caguas, Puerto Rico. It's just another reason why the 23-year-old is so appealing both in and out of the ring. That stability may translate into a chance at a minor title belt by this fall, possibly against the winner of the Vivian Harris-Oktay Urkal fight.

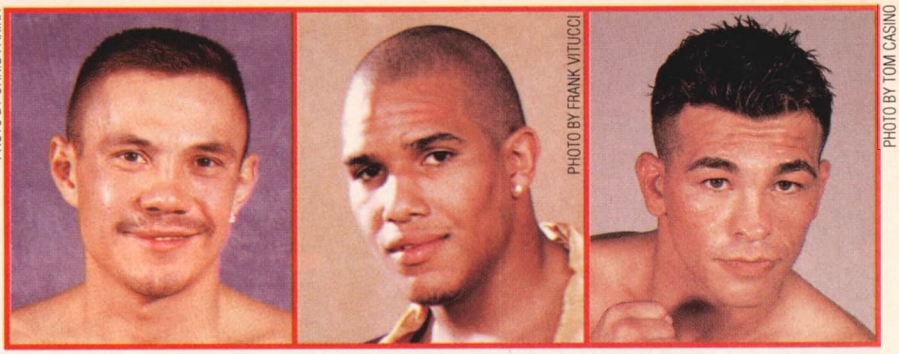


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

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PHOTO BY TOM CASINO

Junior welterweight champion Kostya Tszyu and contenders Sharmba Mitchell and Arturo Gatti could potentially stand in the way of Cotto's march to the junior welterweight title. But all three have had problems of one kind or another recently, and some experts already favor Cotto to beat them.

Cotto, 19-0 (16), obviously has long viewed himself among the junior welter elite. But it took his three-knockdown victory over the usually durable Sosa to secure a few more believers. HBO ringside analyst Larry Merchant is among them.

"I think, talent-wise, Cotto's as good as anyone in his division," Merchant said. "He seems very centered and ambitious, and you can't say that about many prize fighters. You can tell he won't cheat his talent. He'll get the most out of himself. We haven't seen him against a top 140-pounder and we haven't seen him face adversity yet, but you sense he can deal with that.

"He still hasn't met a guy who hits as hard as Tszyu or met a guy as crafty as Mitchell. But one thought I did have in watching Cotto's fight against Sosa is that this is the first fighter I've seen who would someday be able to give Floyd

Cotto blisters Sosa with a straight right. The Puerto Rican's patient yet punishing style, exhibited throughout the fourth-round knockout victory over Sosa, is part of why the execs at Top Rank feel Cotto is ready for a title shot this fall.

Cotto knocked Sosa down three times during the fourth round. But if there is one knock on Cotto, it's that he hasn't faced a strong, dangerous junior welterweight. Sosa achieved all of his success at lightweight.

Mayweather all he could handle at 140. But I stress that's *someday*. Right now, he still has to answer the other questions. He's getting into a more serious phase."

So far, the one criticism commonly aimed at Cotto is that he's built his sterling record facing smaller fighters. Cotto's two signature wins have come against Sosa and former WBC titlist Cesar Bazan, both blown-up lightweights who made the five-pound jump to meet Cotto at 140. Earlier in his development, Cotto achieved a victory in his 10th fight over Justin Juuko, an inflated junior lightweight who had lost three of his previous five fights before meeting Cotto.

It's a criticism that Cotto shrugs off, simply saying he fights whomever Top Rank, his promotional company, puts in front of him. Top Rank contests that they are following the same traditional formula in building Cotto—taking on name guys who established themselves at lighter weights—as was used to build some of their other great fighters, such as Oscar De La Hoya.

"I have heard the same criticism with

Cotto rams a jab into Sosa's face. This win was probably Cotto's most noteworthy, as his Dominican foe was coming off a competitive 12-round decision loss to world lightweight champ Floyd Mayweather just three fights earlier.

Sosa absorbs a vicious left hook, just barely in legal territory, from the undefeated Puerto Rican. Among his many talents, Cotto is one of the best young bodypunchers in the game.

respect to Oscar, and it surprises me that people would critique that strategy and game plan for Oscar; I mean, look at what he's done," said Bruce Trampler, Top Rank's matchmaker. "In Cotto's case, we sat down and looked at someone like a Bazan, who was intentionally the toughest fight Cotto could have had at that point. We felt it would build a foundation for him.

"We wouldn't commit the same flagrant errors that were made with other Olympians. We wanted to match Cotto right. There has been a master plan with Cotto all along. The grand design is to get Cotto rounds and get him some seasoning. As far as these guys being blown-up lightweights, or super featherweights, everyone is a blown-up something. You can go down the list, starting with Oscar and Shane Mosley. But I wasn't conscious of Cotto being in there with smaller guys. I'm not even sure these guys were even blown up. When we faced Bazan, he was as likely to make 135 pounds as me. Those guys were former lightweights, but they had trouble making 135 pounds."

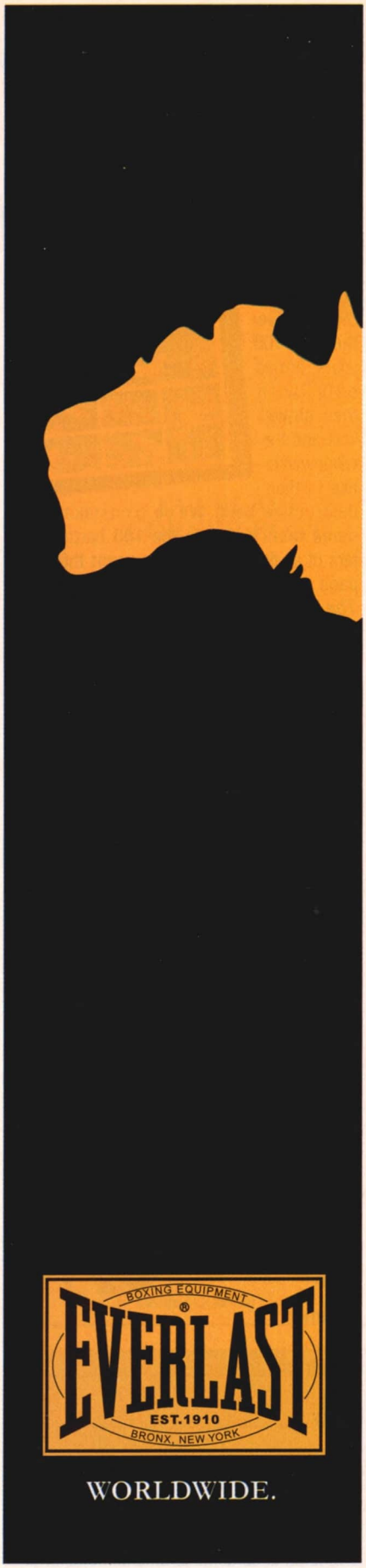
Trampler went on to point out that a number of contenders want no part of Cotto. Gatti's people, according to Trampler, would eschew fighting Cotto, as would Mitchell's. It makes more sense for those contenders to shoot for the ultimate prize—Tszyu—than risk their standing and a big payday by going up against a low-reward (at least for now) threat like Cotto.

Top Rank, however, knows their fighter is ready for the leap.

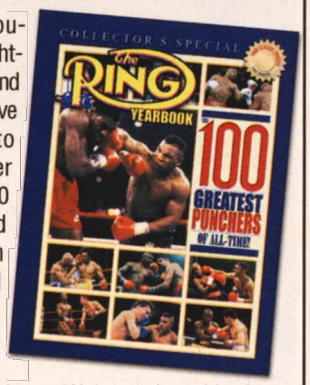
"Our philosophy is when we put a guy in a title fight, we want him to be ready to win a title," Trampler said. "We think Cotto's ready to win a title. It's all timing. I'd like him to have a fight or two before he makes the jump this fall. Certainly, the hope is that Cotto will even be better than he is now. There is every reason to believe he will be."

In boxing, however, there are title fights, and then there are *real* title fights. Tszyu is still the *real* champion at 140 pounds.

"I'd let Cotto fight him now," Trampler said of Tszyu, without hesitation, "but I'd prefer Cotto to fight him six months from now. Cotto has had a good, tough amateur foundation, and I'd say he's good



BOXING'S GREATEST PUNCHERS



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HBO analyst Larry Merchant, pictured interviewing Cotto after the Sosa victory, believes Cotto is as talented as anyone at 140 pounds. Cotto spoke to Merchant in Spanish, but he showed off his improving command of English when he spoke with THE RING.

enough right now to be among the best. He's in the gym all of the time and he has a solid work ethic. He's a family man who's mature beyond his chronological age. He really makes our job a lot easier. He's the type of kid that if you tell him, 'You're going to fight Shane Mosley,' he'll get ready."

Saying Cotto could beat Tszyu, Mitchell, or Gatti is purely conjecture, but there is one thing about Cotto that is certain: He's easily outdistanced himself from the rest of the 2000 Olympians who compete at 140, starting with his conqueror in Sydney, Australia, Uzbekistan's Muhammad Abdullaev. In June '03, Abdullaev, 13-1 (10), suffered his first pro loss, against Emmanuel Clottey.

Once highly touted American Ricardo Williams, 9-1 (5), has been buried under an avalanche of criticism, questioning his discipline and desire as a fighter, in light of his loss in February '03 to Juan Valenzuela. As of press time, Cotto was scheduled to fight Valenzuela in May in a fight that can both confirm Cotto's superiority to Williams and prove his ability to handle a full-sized 140-pounder.

Mexican Olympian Francisco Bojado, 15-1 (11), has also been accused of slovenly training habits, leading to his defeat to Juan Carlos Rubio in February '02. Though Bojado is gradually working his way back under his third pro trainer, Floyd Mayweather Sr., he is considered a full level below Cotto at this stage.

"Right now Cotto has to be the class of Olympic junior welters, and he's looked like the real deal," said Fox SportsNet analyst Max Kellerman. "Williams isn't a factor; Bojado's coming back. You have to love this Cotto kid. Cotto is a classic boxer-puncher who uses short punches and has good hand speed. He may be ready for those guys at the top, but he does have some time."

And Cotto, to his credit, has an understanding of how to use his time wisely. He's observed how not being bilingual has hurt the marketability of Latin fighters in the U.S., and he's been working hard on his English. Though he speaks and understands the language well, he's still tentative to use it on live HBO broadcasts at this point.

One other thing that sets Cotto apart, even from where the great Felix Trinidad was at this stage of his career, is that Cotto is drawing a huge following everywhere he fights, especially in Puerto Rico.

"They're just massive crowds," Trampler said. "Take any of these so-called prospects, and Cotto totally outdistances all of them. He may have broken out of the gates with everyone, but he's asserted himself, and he's doing big, big business. He's selling to homes there in Puerto Rico even greater than Oscar and Trinidad did early in their careers. He's special."

And he's ready to take over. ■

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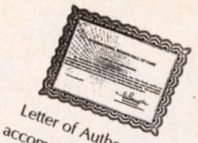

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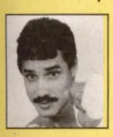

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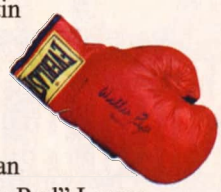

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What Happens When A Trainer Trades Corners

PHOTOS BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

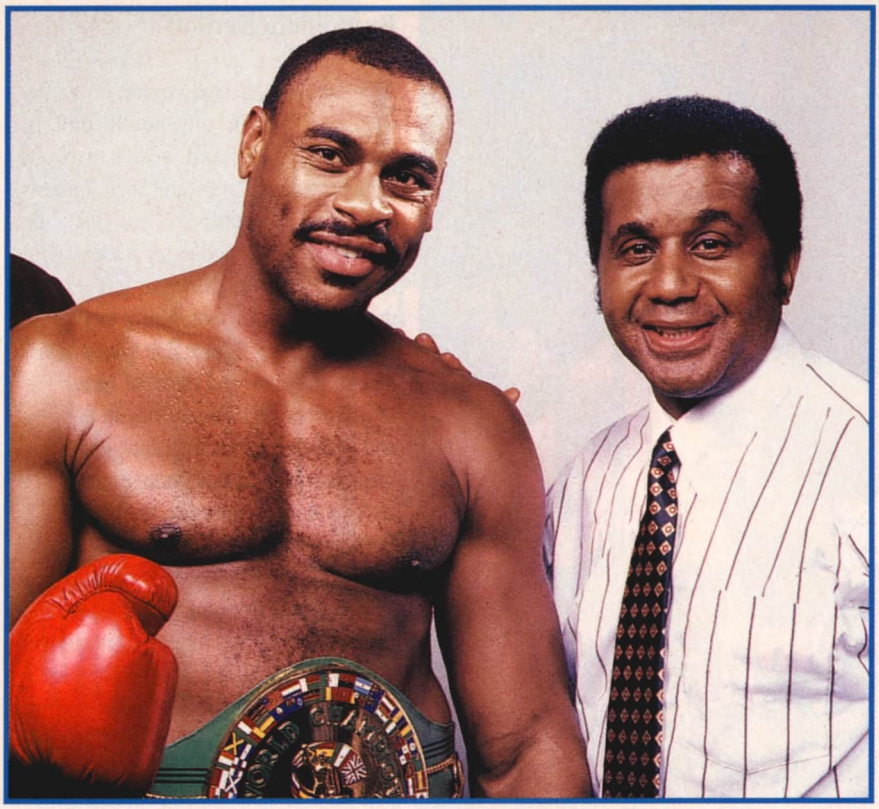
By William Dettloff

In the romanticized version of boxing that lives in our heads and in Hollywood, and sometimes in Philadelphia, trainers and their fighters are linked like father and son. They are learned professor and eager student, wise man and disciple. They are inseparable; the trainer knows everything there is to know about his fighter. He knows when he's in the zone and can't be beaten; he knows when he's feeling lazy in the gym and needs a kick in the pants; he knows when his kid has had enough and when he just doesn't have it, or when he's fighting with his girlfriend and isn't really there. The trainer knows when his guy is getting lazy bringing back the jab, and if he's good, he lets him take the counter right to teach him a lesson. They are a team.

In March, junior lightweight puncher Diego Corrales took revenge on Joel Casamayor, outpointing him over 12 rounds on Showtime. It was the rematch, of course, to Casamayor's thrilling stoppage win over "Chico" the prior October. Many things were different this time besides the outcome. Corrales jabbed more. He outboxed the boxer. He kept his fool chin down, for the most part. And he had Casamayor's former trainer in his corner.

Joe Goossen, who had a long and mostly successful history with Casamayor, watched, cheered, and instructed from Corrales' corner. The split between he and Casamayor was mostly amicable and had much to do, reportedly, with Casamayor's decision to change the location of his training camp—a decision with which Goossen disagreed and which he resisted to the point that fighter and trainer, apparently not as close as our preference would allow, split. That Goossen wound up in Corrales' corner for the rematch, rather than somewhere

Diego Corrales lands a left hook on Joel Casamayor's chin en route to a 12-round decision in their rematch (opposite page). Besides the outcome, the biggest difference the second time around was that trainer Joe Goossen was in Corrales' corner (left) instead of Casamayor's. It remains a matter of opinion how much the change helped Corrales or hurt Casamayor.



In one of the most significant trainer reversals in recent history, Emanuel Steward helped Oliver McCall take the WBC heavyweight belt away from Lennox Lewis (top) in 1994, via shocking second-round kayo. When Lewis and McCall fought again in '97, Steward was working with Lewis, who regained the title with a fifth-round TKO (above).

else in someone else's corner, anyone else's corner, probably is indicative of how business comes first in this hard game, and also that the split might not have been as amicable as one might have hoped. Either way, it wasn't the first time a trainer ended up conspiring with one who was once an enemy, against one who was once a friend.

It doesn't happen terribly frequently. When it does, logic tells us that the fighter who is opposing his former trainer is at a significant disadvantage, particularly if the fight is a rematch. It would seem tantamount to a football team sharing its playbook with the opposition, the equivalent of a batter stealing signs and thus knowing in advance when the slider is coming or the change-up. Opinion within the industry, however, is split as to the weight and breadth of the influence.

"It's a slight advantage; not a big one," Hall of Fame trainer and manager Gil Clancy told THE RING. "The trainer knows the style and what bothers the guy, like if he's always open for right hands or left hooks, or if he can't move to his right. The other guy still has to do the job."

It's a good point; any trainer will tell you that telling your fighter what to do is one thing. You can even tell him how to do it. If you're inclined, you can even show him how to do it. But if he can't do it, if he's afraid to accept the risk involved in doing it, or if he doesn't trust the advice, he won't do it. That's the hell of being a trainer: seeing what needs to be done, knowing what will happen if it's done correctly, and then watching, powerlessly, when it's not done. Still, recent history at least suggests that given the right circumstances, having your former trainer in the corner of your opponent can present a significant health risk.

Probably the most noteworthy recent example involves Emanuel Steward, who in 1994 was solicited by Don King to train King's mercurial heavyweight, Oliver McCall, to meet WBC heavyweight titleholder Lennox Lewis—in England no less. Of course, McCall was a considerable underdog; he'd lost to Buster Douglas, Mike "The Bounty" Hunter, and several other lower-echelon heavyweights, while Lewis, though flawed, was a recognized puncher and an undefeated one at that. Nobody doubted McCall could punch going in. Lewis was just better.

Steward, as he later relayed, told McCall to punch with a right hand straight down the

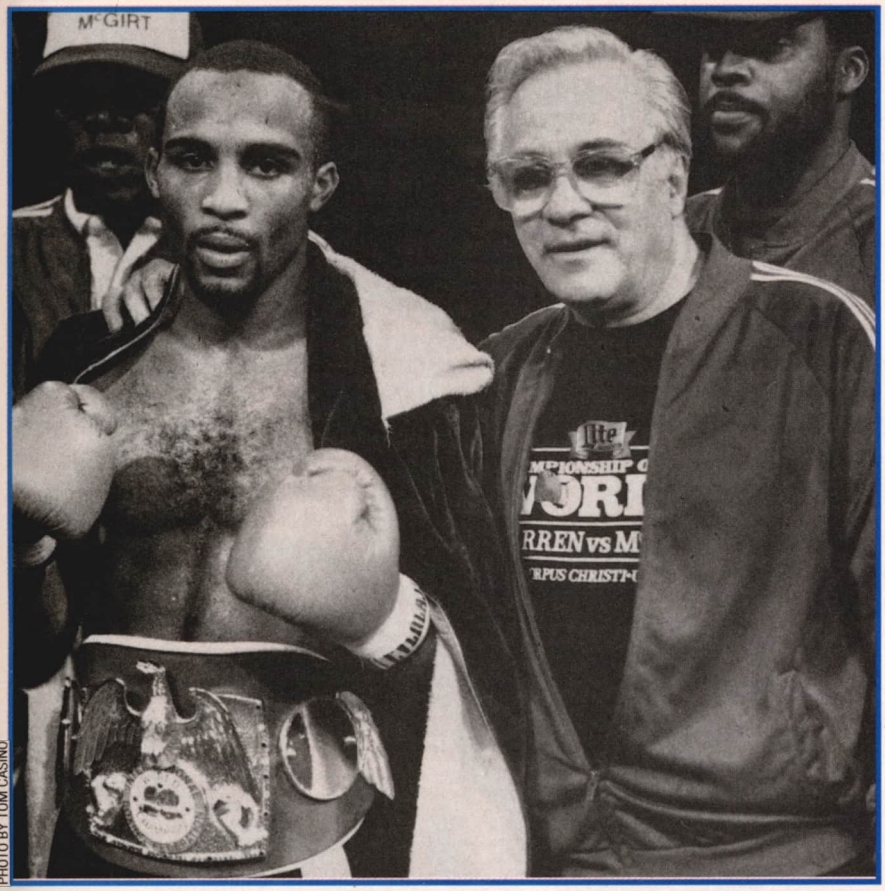


PHOTO BY TOM CASINO

Trainer Al Certo and Buddy McGirt (pictured following McGirt's 1988 kayo of Frankie Warren) were together throughout most of the two-division titleholder's stellar career. But when Certo wanted to convince McGirt to retire, he trained opponent Darren Maciunski, who beat McGirt in Buddy's final bout.

middle and he'd catch Lewis. McCall closed his eyes and did that in the second round, and Lewis' first reign was over. Shortly thereafter, Lewis hired Steward, and during the ensuing three years, Steward, who by any measure is the most accomplished trainer of his era and one of the best ever at producing champions, made him better. When the rematch came three years later, Lewis pounded McCall en route to a fifth-round stoppage win that featured McCall's famous in-the-ring nervous breakdown.

On the surface at least, it would appear Steward was the primary factor involved in the wins of each guy; he was in the winning corner each time. But you could make the argument that McCall was clearly not the same fighter he was when he beat Lewis. He'd lost to Frank Bruno, of all people, and obviously was not in the best frame of mind for fighting when Lewis stopped him. Indeed, it may have been more about where the fighters were in their careers than about who was in the corners. Some believe having your former trainer in the other guy's corner carries no great weight at all.

"It's not a help for the simple reason that if you have a fighter who believes in himself, you don't worry about stuff like that," said trainer and 1980s WBA light heavyweight beltholder Eddie Mustafa Muhammad. "You have a strategy and you work it. It doesn't make a difference."

Muhammad has a unique perspective on the subject.

"It's never happened with a guy I've trained, but it did when I was fighting," he said. "My trainer was Slim Robinson. We had a dispute, not a big dispute, but a dispute, and broke up. He went and trained Ricky Parkey, who I then fought. Having Slim didn't help Parkey at all. [Muhammad won a 10-round decision.] Only way it could have helped him is if he grew another arm."

There has been at least one instance in recent history when a trainer wound up against one of his former fighters for the good of that former fighter. Al Certo trained and managed Buddy McGirt (now a sought-after trainer himself) to the IBF junior welter-

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By the time Eddie Mustafa Muhammad fought Rickey Parkey in 1984, he had fallen out with former trainer Slim Robinson, who was by then working with Parkey. The switch didn't help Parkey, who lost a 10-round decision to the former WBA light heavyweight kingpin.

weight and WBC welterweight titles in 1988 and '91, respectively. By the mid-'90s, McGirt was shot, but fighting on anyway. Certo tried unsuccessfully to get him to retire, and then left him, hoping it would do the trick. It didn't, and in January '97, McGirt faced former sparring partner Darren Maciunski, a journeyman junior middleweight whose trainer happened to be Certo.

"I knew Buddy's legs were gone prior to that," said Certo. "He had nothing left. He was shot. I knew that losing to a guy like Maciunski would embarrass him. I just told Maciunski to keep the pressure on him and make him back up because he had no legs." Maciunski pounded McGirt and won a 10-round decision. McGirt never fought again.

Does Certo think his former alliance with McGirt gave Maciunski any strategic advantage? Yes and no. "Maciunksi felt comfortable. He felt like he had an edge because I knew Buddy. But it was more like a psychological thing. And it really worked on Buddy. The only strategic thing was I knew Buddy's legs were gone and told Maciunski to back him up. It was mostly psychological."

Psychology aside, Certo believes the influence this kind of situation has on a fight's outcome is overstated. "You can't just jump in a guy's corner and perform miracles," he said. "It only works that way in the movies. When you become a trainer, it takes years before you learn anything about your fighter. It takes a long time to find out what he likes and what he doesn't like in the ring. You got to know your guy. You still gotta have the ability to beat the other guy."

What much of this comes down to is the age-old question: Does the trainer make the fighter or does the fighter make the trainer?

"It goes hand in hand," said Aaron Snowell, who trained former IBF bantamweight tilist Tim Austin, and who also famously did a stretch with Mike Tyson. "If you're a good trainer and you don't have the talent to work with, it's no good. This is what good trainers are able to do: They can take an average fighter and make him good. They can make a good fighter very good. And they can make a very good fighter a superstar. But you have to remember you're not God; you can't give something to someone that they don't have. You can only work with the talent you have."

Before Corrales beat Casamayor in their rematch, even Goossen acknowledged that there wasn't a lot about Corrales that he was going to be able to change in the short time they had together. But Corrales did some things he didn't do in the first fight and those things got him the win. Would he have done them without having Casamayor's former trainer in his corner? Probably. But it didn't hurt. And in this business, you take any break you can get. ■

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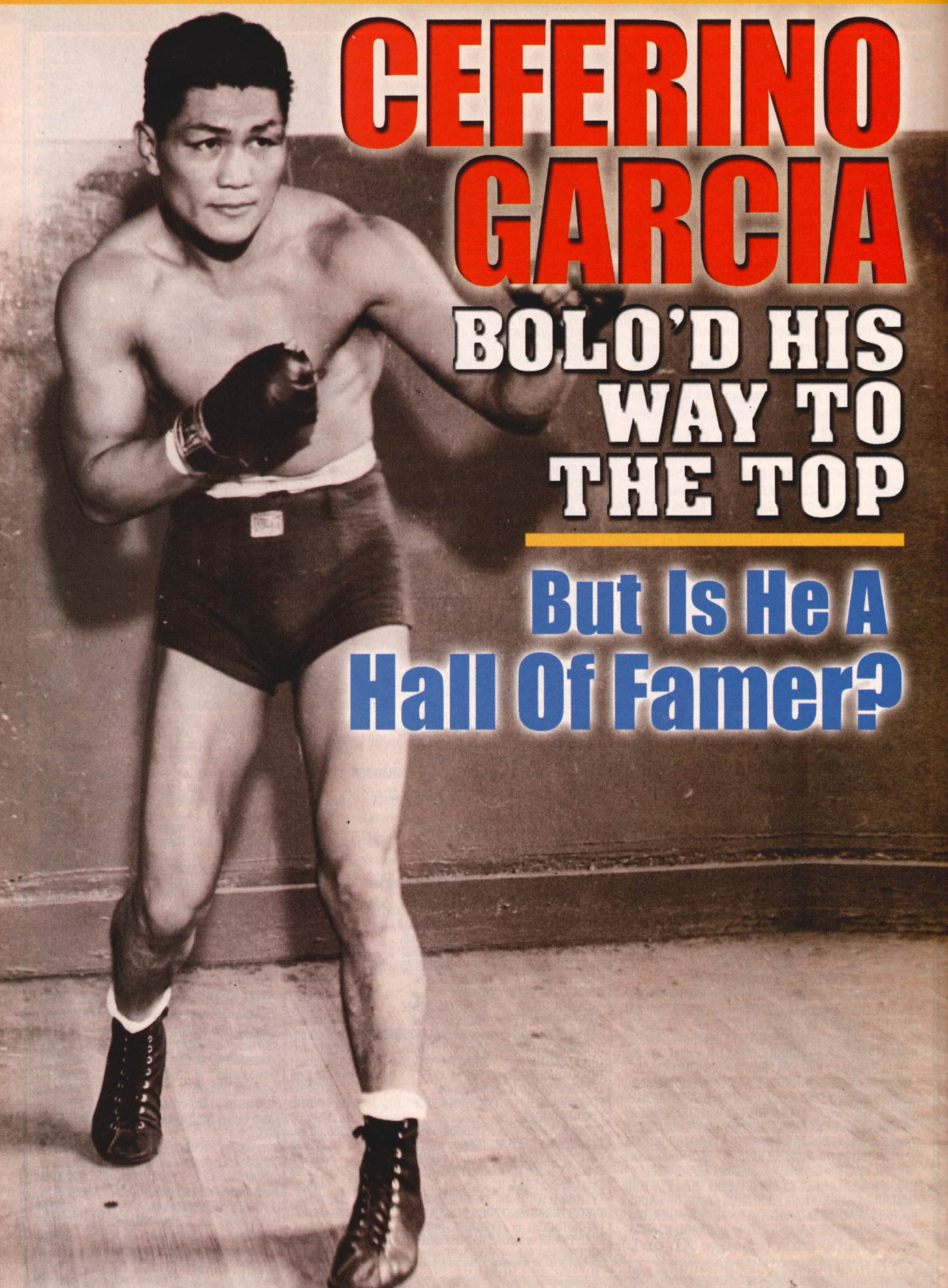


CEFERINO GARCIA

BOLO'D HIS WAY TO THE TOP

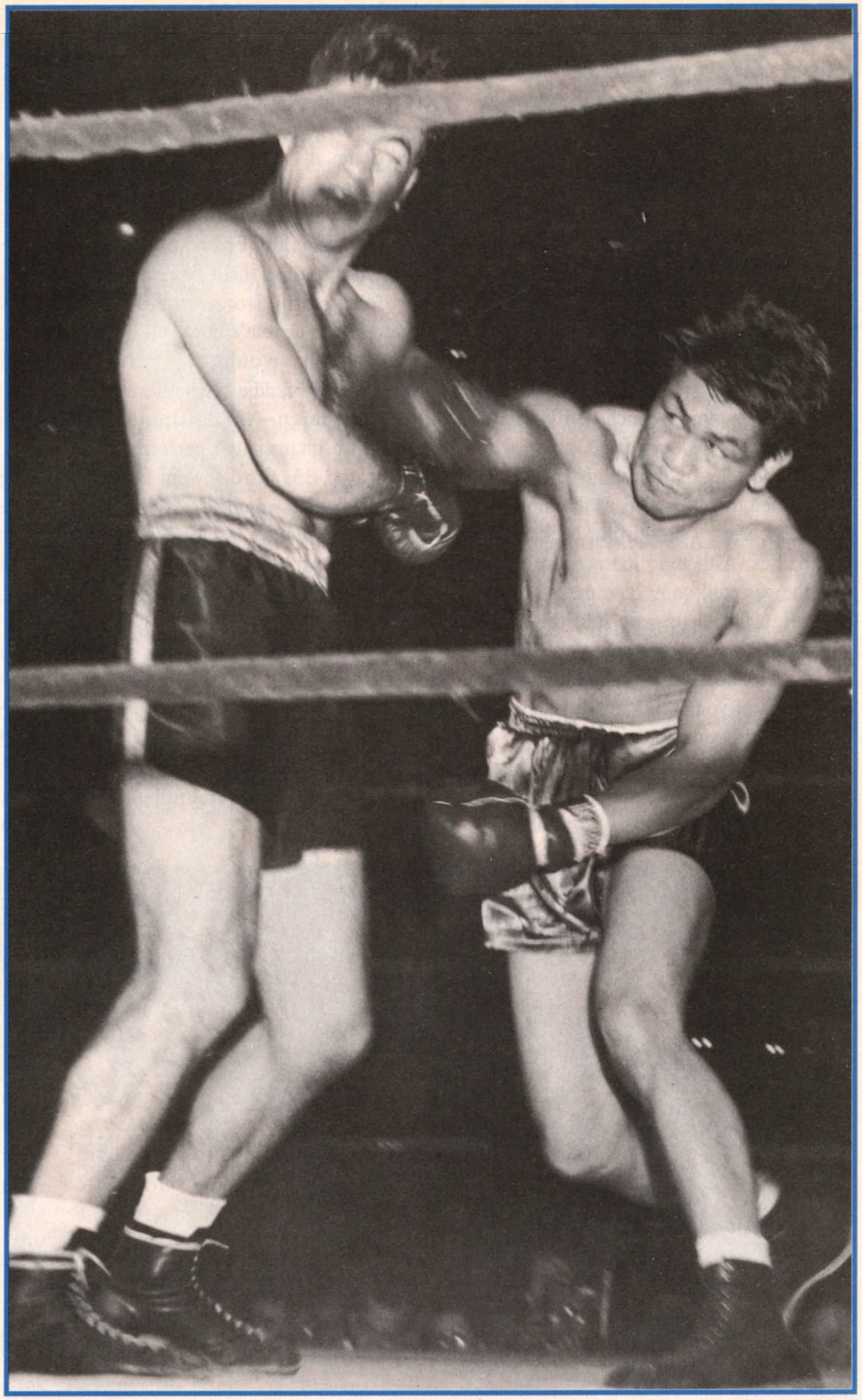
But Is He A Hall Of Famer?

By Robert Cassidy

Fighters from foreign soil have always enriched the American boxing ring. Aspiring pugs from Cuba, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and other Latin countries have for decades chased boxing glory to the United States. In more recent years, fighters from the former Soviet Union and other Eastern Bloc countries have come stateside for the opportunity to advance their careers.

There was a time, though, when the sport was saturated with talent from the Philippines. They came in droves, almost as if they were crossing the Pacific Ocean to attack the shores of the West Coast. They certainly came to fight.

Flyweight champions Little Dado and Small Montana, bantamweight title claimants Speedy Dado and Pablo Dano, and featherweight title challenger Ignacio Fernandez were among those who arrived in the United States in the late-1920s and early-'30s. Their impact on the sport of boxing was immediate, their success a tremendous source of pride in the Philippines. Among them was also Cipriano "Pedro" Garcia, who would be better known in American rings as Ceferino Garcia. He would box from 1927 to 1945 and twice challenge for the welterweight crown before winning the middleweight title. Garcia, long been considered the best "big" fighter to come to America from the Philippines, was an action fighter with considerable punching power. His career began in Manila and then shifted to California. But his most memorable bouts took place in New York, then the fight capital of the world, and that helped increase Garcia's popularity and stature. He fought Barney Ross three times and Henry Armstrong twice—each a memorable contest—but his ledger is also marked by periods of inconsistency and inexplicable defeats.



Underdog Garcia slams Fred Apostoli with a right hand en route to a seventh-round knockout and the middleweight title. The bout took place at Madison Square Garden on October 2,1939, after the Filipino had failed in two cracks at the welterweight title.

Garcia was born on August 26, 1910, and was raised in the small, rural town of Naval. His father, Fortunato "Poto" Garcia, was a laborer on a small plantation and was said to be proficient with the bolo, a small machete-type implement used to cut crops.

Ceferino didn't have any real schooling. He worked very early in life as a blacksmith and a messenger, and also toiled in the fields, where his father passed on his skill of wielding the bolo. Ceferino was the oldest of six children,

with two brothers and three sisters.

Garcia would later say that his work as a blacksmith helped him develop his upper body strength and that the hours he spent swinging the bolo provided him with his "bolo punch," a right uppercut-hook hybrid that was devastating to opponents.

Around the age of 15, Garcia left home and settled in Cebu City, an underprivileged region that would later produce junior lightweight champion Gabriel "Flash" Elorde.

It has been written that when the great flyweight champion Pancho Villa lay in state in Manila, a young Garcia was among the tens of thousands of people who passed by his casket. At that time, he vowed to bring a world title back to the Philippines. Although that account reads like the scripted copy of a press release that often found its way into the hero-worshiping sports sections of the 1930s, it is clear that the success of Villa inspired a generation of young fighters that included Garcia, Little Dado, and many others.

Garcia was a proficient and busy streetfighter with a reputation that finally led him to the fight game. He turned pro in the Philippines in 1923 and made the equivalent of $1.50 in his debut, a six-round draw against Pedro del Mundo. His record over the next few years is sketchy, but all agree that Garcia journeyed to United States in 1932 under the auspices of Jesus Cortez, a Filipino who brought young fighters to America in a partnership with manager Frank Churchill. Garcia won his first three bouts on U.S. soil before getting stopped by Tommy Herman. While Garcia's competition was demanding—he would fight Young Corbett III and Freddie Steele during his initial campaign—the Filipino was putting forth inconsistent performances. In 1932 and '33, Garcia went 23-11-3 (15). During that span he was stopped four times, unusual for a fighter who, during his peak, was considered to have an outstanding chin.

Cortez became disenchanted with his prospect and sold his contract to George Parnassus. The new manager recognized Garcia's talent, but also acknowledged his poor training habits. The first thing Parnassus did was hire trainer Johnny Villaflor, who was also from the Philippines.

It was written in more than one publication that Garcia, suddenly flush with the kind of money unavailable to him in his homeland, had an affinity for automobiles. He acquired a new one whenever the mood struck him and he drove them with little regard for the speed limit. Parnassus made it a rule that Garcia never drive to and from a fight, with the manager and trainer splitting the driving duties on many of their out-of-town excursions.

In 1935, Garcia met Barney Ross in the first two of their three meetings. Their initial encounter took place in San Francisco, but Ross' welterweight title was not at stake. Garcia's bolo punch dropped the champion in the first round, and it has been suggested that Ross was the beneficiary of a long count. Nonetheless, he survived the round and the fight, winning a 10-round decision. They met again at the close of the year in Chicago, and Ross won another decision.

When promoter Mike Jacobs was assembling his "Carnival Of Champions" for the Polo Grounds on September 23, 1937, Parnassus was able to sell his fighter as the only fitting opponent for Ross. At the time there were eight weight divisions in the sport, and Jacobs assembled a card that featured four world title bouts: Ross-Garcia, Sixto Escobar-Harry Jeffra at bantamweight, Lou Ambers-Pedro Montanez at lightweight, and Fred Apostoli-Marcel Thil at middleweight.

Henry Armstrong and Garcia greet each other at the conclusion of their historic 10-round draw in Los Angeles in March 1940. Garcia lost the 160-pound title to Ken Overlin in his next defense.

The Ross-Garcia fight was the best on the card. Ross boxed brilliantly to retain his title with a unanimous decision, but Garcia, who suffered two cuts early, fought gamely and relentlessly throughout the contest. The effort made Garcia a star in New York.

After that bout, Ross said, "Nobody ever hit harder. I believe, pound-for-pound, Ceferino Garcia is the greatest puncher in the ring today. I include Joe Louis."

In November 1938, Garcia

After his fighting days were over, Garcia stayed in California and worked in the restaurant trade. At one point he even owned a restaurant with his former manager George Parnassus.

got his second shot at the welterweight title, meeting Henry Armstrong at Madison Square Garden in the first of their two meetings. Garcia lost a unanimous decision, but continued to make fans in New York with his courageous style of fighting. Although there was no disputing the decision, it was reported that fans actually booed when Armstrong won the fight.

Esteemed boxing writer Frank Graham wrote of that fight, "For continuous action, this was the kind of fight that might have been made up for the movies. But this one was for keeps."

"Garcia nailed me with his bolo punch," Armstrong was quoted as saying after the bout. "The blow dazed me for a few seconds. But I was never hurt so bad where I didn't know what I was doing."

It is a common belief in boxing that Cuba's Kid Gavilan was the first to develop the bolo punch. Like Garcia, Gavilan swung the bolo in the sugar cane fields as a youth. But it was Garcia who popularized the punch decades before Gavilan made his mark.

Graham once compared boxing's two best bolo punchers: "The Kid's [Gavilan] bolo was a right uppercut that impressed his gallery gods more than it did his opponents, for he almost never landed it. Garcia's true bolo was the equivalent of a right hook, with which he flattened many a guy."

In the fall of 1939, Garcia would finally be crowned champion when he stopped Fred Apostoli for the New York middleweight title in seven rounds. Now fighting with the luxury of not having to make 147 pounds, Garcia dominated Apostoli and dropped him three times in the final round.

Garcia's first title defense, a 13th-round knockout of Glen Lee at Rizal Stadium in Manila, was refereed by former heavyweight champion Jack Dempsey. While it took Garcia 14 years to win the title, his reign as champ was relatively brief.

In March of 1940, Armstrong was seeking to win his fourth title in as many weight classes and challenged Garcia in Los Angeles. Again, the bout didn't disappoint the crowd, as Garcia and Armstrong waged a toe-to-toe affair. Referee George Blake, the sole judge, ruled the 10-rounder a draw. Two months later, an uninspired Garcia would lose his middleweight title via unanimous decision to Ken Overlin.

Garcia retired in 1945 after a loss to journeyman Wild Bill McDowell in Houston. His final record is listed at 97-26-9 (64), but it wouldn't be surprising if a number of early bouts in the Philippines are missing from that tally.

It is difficult to gauge Garcia's proper standing in the annals of history. He was inducted into THE RING's Hall of Fame in 1977 and has been enshrined in the World Boxing Hall of Fame. But he has yet to take his place in the International Boxing Hall of Fame in Canastota, New York. Filipino boxing journalists consider his omission a slight, and there's no denying the fact that his last bout being more than a half-century ago clearly works against him among some voters. But the inconsistency of Garcia's performances also has to be taken into account.

In his prime years (1936-'40), Garcia beat quality fighters such as Jackie Burke, Kid Azteca, Young Peter Jackson, and Lloyd Marshall, and drew with Izzy Jannazzo. Still, he was criticized for being uninspired in losses to Overlin and Anton Christoforidis.

Garcia remained primarily in California after his career, where he and his wife, Catherine, raised a daughter, Vicki, and a son, Ceferino Jr. The ex-champ got into the restaurant business, working as a waiter and maitre d', and even owned a restaurant in partnership with Parnassus.

Garcia returned to Manila in September of 1964 to visit his ailing mother. During the visit, which lasted about a month, Garcia was feted by the Philippine Sportswriters Organization and the Philippine Boxing Association.

Garcia lived the final years of his life in San Diego and often attended fight cards. He suffered from arthritis and a kidney ailment, and died in January of 1981 at the age of 74.

Perhaps Parnassus summed up Garcia's career best when he said, "For a fighter who was considered washed-up when I bought his contract, I thought he did exceptionally well. Those he could catch, there was seldom any doubt of the outcome. For those he couldn't catch, there was often quite a bit of doubt." ■

Robert Cassidy is a former associate editor of this magazine and a regular contributor.

SUMMARY

HEAVYWEIGHTS

Hasim Rahman W 10 Al Cole
Monte Barrett W 10 Dominick Guinn
Joe Mesi W 10 Vassiliy Jirov
Clifford Etienne D 8 Gilbert Martinez
Sergei Lyakhovich W 6 Onebo Maxime
Tony Thompson W 8 Yamplier Azcuy
Audley Harrison KO 4 Richel Hersisia
Danny Williams KO 1 Ratko Draskovic
Mendauga Kulikauskas KO 3 Herbie Hide
Eliseo Castillo KO 3 Curtis Taylor
Obed Sullivan KO 5 Chavez Francisco
Rob Calloway KO 2 Dino Salcedo
David Defiagbon W 6 Ken Murphy
Jean Francois Bergeron KO 2 Rogerio Lobo
Donnell Holmes KO 3 Frankie Edmondson
Paolo Vidoz KO 3 Thierry Guezouli
Malcolm Tann KO 1 Wesley Martin
Konstantin Onofrei W 10 Adnan Serin
Bob Mirovic KO 3 Silovate Rasaku
Ruslan Chagaev KO 2 Alexei Varakin
Michael Simms KO 6 Marcelino Novaes
Sultan Ibragimov W 8 Alexei Osokin
Leo Nolan W 8 Ken Murphy
B.J. Flores W 4 Eric French

CRUISERWEIGHTS

Pietro Aurino KO 2 Sergio Beaz
Ravea Springs KO 5 Daryl Smith
Grigory Drozd KO 9 Saul Montana
Vincenzo Cantatore W 12 Ismael Abdoul
Valery Brudov KO 5 Angel Antonio Aguirre
Adrian Diaconu W 10 Roberto Coelho
Chad Van Sickle KO 8 Vinson Durham
Mark Hobson KO 3 Tony Moran
Tyrone Tate W 4 Everand Ramage

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS

Fabrice Tiozzo W 12 Silvio Branco
(Wins WBA Title)
Mehdi Sahnoune KO 2 Christopher Robert
Elvir Muriqi KO 3 Charlie Ward
Rico Hoye KO 1 Donnell Wiggins
Giovanni Alvarez W 10 Paolo Ferrara
David Haye KO 1 Hastings Rasani
Darnell Wilson KO 3 Forest Neal
Rocky Smith KO 9 Nick Cook
Erasmus Magwaza KO 3 Jim Murray
Allen Green W 8 Willard Lewis

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Sven Ottke W 12 Armand Krajnc
(Retains IBF & WBA Titles)
Danny Green W 10 Sean Sullivan
Mikkel Kessler KO 1 Julio Cesar Green
Danilo Haussler W 12 Henry Porras
David Lopez KO 9 Jerson Ravelo
Carl Daniels KO 2 Rico Cason
Vinny Paz W 10 Tocker Pudwill
Librado Andrade W 12 Willie Stewart

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

Vinny Paz plants a left on Tocker Pudwill's mug en route to his 50th win

Rudy Markussen No-Contest 1 Kabary Salem
Rubin Williams W 10 Kenny Bowman
Carl Froch W 12 Charles Adamu
James Lubwama KO 6 Dave Hadden
Ryan Rhodes W 8 Scott Dixon
Kelly Pavlik KO 2 Roberto Baro
Chad Dawson W 6 Aundalan Sloan
Ricardo Cortes KO 3 Errol Banner
James McGirt KO 1 Robert Rice

MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Jermain Taylor KO 7 Alex Bunema
Yory Boy Campas W 10 Dumont Welliver
Ottavio Barone KO 9 Lansana Diallo
Jesse Brinkley KO 9 Cleveland Corder
Dorian Beaupierre D 10 Daniel Edouard
Kenny Ellis KO 11 Darrell Woods
Lee Montoya W 8 Max Heyman
George Armenta KO 4 Dante Craig
Sakio Bika KO 5 Joel Burke
Marlon Thomas W 4 Corey Budd
Reggie Strickland KO 4 Toris Smith
Jesus Gonzales W 6 Chris Grays
Ronald Hearns KO 1 Alex Black

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Winky Wright W 12 Shane Mosley
(Wins World Title)
Keith Holmes W 10 Kuvanych Toygonbayev
Kofi Jantuah W 10 Leon Pearson
Jose Celaya KO 1 Richard Lee Hall
Hector Camacho Jr. KO 2 Mike Davis
Reda Zam Zam KO 1 Dennis de Barros
Michele Orlando W 6 Virgil Meleg
Thomas McDonough W 6 Craig Lynch
Daniel Dawson KO 4 Nick Lundh
Ismael Arvin KO 3 Willie Lee
John Revish KO 1 Leo Lizarraga

WELTERWEIGHTS

Michele Piccirillo W 8 Louis Mimoune
Carlos Baldomir KO 8 Alpaslan Aguzum
Randall Bailey KO 5 Lester Yarbrough
Joseph Makaringe KO 5 Peter Malinga
Ebo Elder W 10 Oscar Diaz
Carlos Vilches W 10 Alejandro Benitez
Manning Galloway W 8 Ricardo Williams
Walter Matthysse KO 2 Javier Blanco
David Barnes W 12 Glen McClarnon
Riad Menasria KO 6 Abdelhakim Mehidi
Julio Aquino W 8 Brad Jensen
Sven Paris KO 1 Zoran Didanovic
Michael Jennings KO 5 Brett James
Kendall Holt KO 1 Gilberto Reyes
Sintung Kietbusaba KO 2 Hwanyung Park

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS

Sharmba Mitchell W 12 Mike Stewart
Ricky Hatton KO 6 Dennis Holbaek Pedersen
Emanuel Augustus W 12 Alex Trujillo
Leonard Dorin KO 4 Chucky Tschorniawsky
Juan Valenzuela KO 2 Guillermo Valdes
Mark Riggs W 8 Tony Pep
Chad Brisson KO 2 Jeff Hill
Luis Alberto Santiago KO 9 Aaron Torres
Andreas Kotelnik W 8 Sayan Sanchat
Norio Kimura W 10 Shingo Eguchi
Joe Wyatt W 8 Bernard Harris
Lou Bizzarro W 8 Reggie Nash
Noufel Ben Rabah W 6 Fred Kinuthia
Derrick Moon W 6 Edwin Algarin

LIGHTWEIGHTS

Julio Diaz KO 11 Courtney Burton
Leavander Johnson W 10 Roque Cassiani
Stefano Zoff W 12 Laszlo Komjathi
Michael Clark W Disq. 6 Juan Polo-Perez
Rolando Reyes W 10 Ubaldo Hernandez
Gary St. Clair W 10 Cristian Paz
Ramazan Pagliani W 12 Marteze Logan
Ruben Galvan W 10 Ryan Maraldo
Marco Angel Perez W 8 Yoni Vargas
Takehiro Shimada W 10 Chikashi Inada
Ben Cruz W 12 Untung Ortega
Steve Murray W 10 Martin Watson
John Cotterill KO 4 Danny Wilson
Almazbek Raiymkulov W 6 Luis Lizarraga
Darling Jimenez KO 2 Jose Ramon Disla
Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. KO 1
Guadalupe Valdez
Isra Girgrah W 6 Shakurah Witherspoon

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS

Orlando Salido KO 4 Omar Adorno
Cassius Baloyi W 12 Juan Cabrera
Robbie Peden KO 5 Nate Campbell
Michael Gomez KO 3 Ben Odamattey
Lehlo Ledwaba W 8 Choi Tsveerenpurov
Alex Arthur KO 1 Michael Kizza
Daniel Seda W 10 Anthony Martinez
Carl Johanneson KO 3 Carl Greaves
Radford Beasley W 6 Oney Hellems
Takashi Koshimoto W 10
Thongcharoen Mahasapcondo
Pongsith Wiengwiset W 12 Ranee Ganoy
Daniel Jimenez W 10 Phillip Payne

FEATHERWEIGHTS

Spend Abazi W 12 Robert Osiobe
Emanuel Lucero KO 7 Pasqual Rouse
Marcos Licona W 10 Cristian Favela
Fahprakorb Rakkiatgym KO 6 Roberto Oyan
Nicky Cook KO 9 Cyril Thomas
Jorge Solis KO 3 Orlando Soto
Dainoshin Kuma W 10 Motokazu Abe
Carlos Navarro KO 10 Johnny Walker
Daniel Ponce-DeLeon KO 5 Ivan Alvarez
Robert Guerrero Tech. Draw 1
Julian Rodriguez
Ben Dunne W 6 Evangelino Perez
Ben Dunne W 8 Angelo Torres

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS

Israel Vazquez KO 12 Jose Luis Valbuena
(Wins Vacant IBF Title)
Mauricio Martinez KO 6 Cuauhtemoc Gomez
Yasuo Kijima Tech. Win 9 Akihiko Nago
Somsak Sithchatchawal W 12 Dondon Lapuz
Fahsang 3K Battery KO 2 Ramil Anito
Al Seeger KO 3 Calvin Shepard
Oscar Ponce KO 6 Luis Figueroa
Simone Maludrottu KO 6 Andrzej Ziora

BANTAMWEIGHTS

Johnny Bredahl W 12 Nobuaki Naka
(Retains WBA Title)
Heriberto Ruiz W Disq. 7 Carlos Contreras
Mauricio Pastrana KO 9 Marat Mazimbaev
Jhonny Gonzalez KO 6 Roger Gonzalez
Diego Morales W 12 Adonis Rivas
Hawk Makepula KO 4 Johannes Maisa
Sasha Baktin W 10 Ryuichi Minoriyama
Cecilio Santos KO 8 Roberto Bonilla
Ivan Hernandez KO 1 Oscar Martinez
Saenghiran Lookbanyai KO 2 Noel Sungahid

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS

Eric Morel W 12 Jesus Rojas
Luis Maldonado W 10 Jose Alfredo Tirado
Jason Booth W 12 Dale Robinson
Medgoen Singsurat KO 4 Nonong Devilleres
Marco Obregon KO 11 Mercurio Ciaramitaro
Pramuansak Phosuwan KO 4 Jun Magsipoc
Gilberto Gonzalez KO 5
Komrith Lukkeongmuekol
David Martinez W 10 Salvador Casillas

FLYWEIGHTS

Hussein Hussein KO 2 Dedek Chandra
Jose Lopez KO 2 Omar Soto
Manuel Vargas W 12 Francisco Garcia
Luis Valdez KO 4 Erick Ortiz
Franck Gorjux W 12 Monney Seka
Nkqubela Gwazela W 12 Patrick Twala
Francisco Arce W 6 Roberto Gomez

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS

Nelson Dieppa KO 1 Kermin Guardia
Federico Katubai W 10 Yosam Choi
Hugo Cazares KO 9 Juan Alfonso Keb-Baas
Marvin Tampus Tech. Draw 1 Anis Ceunfin

STRAWWEIGHTS

Ivan Calderon KO 11 Edgar Cardenas
Muhammad Rachman KO 2 Somyot Vorapin
Rodel Mayol KO 6 Iwan Key
Rodel Mayol KO 8 Zainuddin Basez

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The RING

FIGHTER *of the* MONTH

You couldn't have blamed Winky Wright if he'd given up on his boxing career by now. Wanting to fight the Trinidads and De La Hoyas, but getting Bronco McKart three times instead, can take the heart right out of a man. So can losing two close, disputed decisions in a three-fight span. So can continuing to face non-entities even after finally winning a title.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

But Wright didn't give up. He may have had a few fights where he lost a little focus and fought down to the level of his opposition, but he always plowed forward, believing that his opportunity would come.

And when it came, against world junior middleweight champion Shane Mosley, there was no way Wright was giving up. If anything, he fought so effectively that Mosley all but gave up, growing frustrated early on and accepting that nothing he had to offer was going to work. Wright outmaneuvered him at every turn, jabbed him silly, matched him bodyshot for bodyshot.

And at the end of 12 rounds, it wasn't close enough for another disappointment to be even a remote possibility. A career-long junior middleweight, Wright is finally the champion of the division. And we shouldn't count on him giving up that status easily.

• • • •

Winky Wright

RINGSIDE REPORTS

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Wright's southpaw jab confounds Mosley

Winky Wright W 12 Shane Mosley

***Las Vegas, Nevada*:** Mosley was the heavy favorite going into his fight with Wright, but the odds were upset when Wright won a wide and deserved unanimous decision at the Mandalay Bay arena to become THE RING (and unified alphabet) junior middleweight champion. The result blew Mosley's planned multimillion-dollar clash with comebacking Felix Trinidad, who was at ringside and may now fight Wright instead.

It was obvious from the first round that Wright, 154, St. Petersburg, Florida, was the naturally bigger guy, and this counted significantly. The southpaw took control with his right jab from the opening bell. Mosley, 154, Pomona, California, tried to jump in with his quick left hook to Wright's body, but Winky came straight back across with his accurate left hand.

Anytime there was a foul and at the start of each round, Mosley, 32, and Wright, also 32, touched gloves, showing the respect they feel for one another. Unfortunately for Mosley, Wright's gloves were often all he could touch.

Wright, 47-3 (25), who has always been close to stardom, showed during his fight with Mosley, round after round, that he was finally ready to step into the spotlight. Wright was in command from the outset. Mosley, 39-3 (35), had some success with his lefts to Wright's body, but the three-division titleholder was always a step behind his awkward challenger.

Sugar Shane tried to come back in the middle rounds, and the sixth was his as he landed rights and lefts to Wright's body. But Mosley slowed from the seventh round on, and Wright took advantage of that. He rocked Mosley in the 10th round and again in the 11th with left hands.

As the final bell was approaching, Trinidad could obviously see his showdown with Mosley disappearing. Sugar Shane came back to win the last round, but it was not a concern to Wright. The southpaw covered up and stayed away from the big shots, believing he was well ahead on the cards. The 9,017 fans were on their feet in the last 20 seconds of the fight as both classy fighters stood and exchanged combinations.

The judges at ringside all scored the fight for Wright. Chuck Giampa (USA) and Dave Moretti (USA) scored it 117-111, while Paul Smith (USA) saw it 116-112, the same as THE RING.

Mosley said afterward that he felt he came into the ring dehydrated and couldn't do what he wanted to do. Wright said he would fight Mosley again, to return the chance he was given, but added, "Trinidad … I'm looking for you."

Wright went through a 14-year struggle to get to where he is today, but now he is the king of the 154-pounders, picking up THE RING championship and the WBC and the WBA belts to go along with the IBF belt he was defending for the fifth time.

The referee was Tony Weeks (USA).

Television: HBO

Promoter: Gary Shaw Productions

(3-13-04)

Wayne McCullough

Diego Corrales W 12 Joel Casamayor

Ledyard, Connecticut: Through the first half of his most recent affair, a March headliner on Showtime, Casamayor looked a lot like Casanova. He was a little too giving, a little too loving, to his junior lightweight rival, to the point where the Foxwoods faithful were almost expecting a proposal rather than a disposal. Corrales wasn't complaining however; their October 2003 slugfest was among the most ferocious flings of the year, and this time around, he was having his way with his consensual counterpart.

Casamayor, who had taken the first fight by way of sixth-round TKO, trudged through the first half of this one in reverse, allowing the 5'10½" Corrales to dictate the dance. Corrales, having clear advantages in strength and motivation, peppered his nemesis with an effective jab, and threw in plenty of right hands as well. While Corrales, 130, chalked up a clear early-round lead through these measures, it wasn't until the fifth round that he landed the fight's first blast—a trademark right hand to the temple—that shook up the 5'7" Casamayor. During the sixth round, as Corrales continued to waver above the crouching lefty, a frustrated Casamayor, 130, dropped his hands to his sides and taunted his enemy.

But the frustration soon gave way—and so did the love. Corrales landed one of his best shots of the night—a hard left hook that closed out the seventh round—but the distance between them was getting smaller and smaller.

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

"Chico" catches Casamayor with a short hook

Casamayor, 32, a large welt surfacing under his right eye, came out for the ninth round with a newfound vigor and pasted Corrales, 26, with a series of straight left hands. Corrales, both tired and hurt, began to wilt, and many wondered if his shaky chin would fail him once again. The concern was compounded in the 10th, when Casamayor unleashed a perfect left hand that caught Corrales on the kisser, dropping him at the 1:30 mark for the only knockdown of the fight. No sooner was Corrales back up than Casamayor, 30-2 (19), was back on his case, slamming home left hands in an attempt to keep the outcome out of the judges' hands.

But this was not to be. Not only did Corrales hang on through the final two rounds to force the decision, but in the 11th, he fired home two giant rights to arguably win the round.

Shortly thereafter, Jimmy Lennon Jr. would deliver the good news for Corrales, 38-2 (31), announcing him the split decision winner and notching the Corrales-Casamayor series at one apiece. While judges Julie Lederman (USA) and George O'Neill (USA) both saw it 115-112 for Corrales, Steve Weisfeld (USA) scored it for Casamayor, 114-113. THE RING had Corrales a close 114-113 winner.

The referee was Steve Smoger (USA).

Promoter: Cedric Kushner Promotions

(3-6-04)

Ted Bodenrader

Mark Johnson KO 4 Luis Bolano

Ledyard, Connecticut: This wasn't Colombia. And this sure as heck wasn't the amateurs.

When Bolano stepped into the Foxwoods ring with "Too Sharp" Johnson snarling back at him, he must have known that this would be like no other organized fist fight he'd ever partaken in. While every previous bout the Colombian had ever embarked on—be it amateur or professional—ended with his arm raised in the air, Bolano's 39th pro fight finished with his face buried in canvas. After only his fourth fight on American soil, it took handlers several minutes to revive Bolano, 115.

Meanwhile, Johnson, 115, added another chapter to one of the sport's feel-good comeback stories of recent years, a saga that began with last August's surprise win over Fernando Montiel at Mohegan Sun. After successive losses to Rafael Marquez devitalized a once-vibrant career, the 32-year-old from Washington, D.C., certainly confirmed his resurrected stance among the world's top junior bantamweights in March's Showtime telecast.

From the outset, it seemed just a matter of time before Johnson would prevail in this skirmish between southpaws, as he proved the stronger of the two from the opening bell. While Johnson nipped out the first round on account of busier hands, Bolano took an aggressive posture in round two, only to be met with the fight's first big bomb, a right cross that wobbled him upon impact.

While Bolano, 34, survived the shot, it only invited more of the same in the third. Johnson moseyed into a stalking mode, and landed right jabs and left uppercuts at will. With Bolano's replies having little effect on Johnson, Too Sharp dropped the guillotine in round four, a perfect right hand that caught Bolano on the mouth. Bolano was up at four, but the end was certainly near. Johnson bulled in and whipped heavy bodyshots into his opponent's midsection, including the finishing right that decimated Bolano, 38-1 (28), in the corner of the ring.

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

Bolano tastes canvas after a wicked bodyshot from Johnson

It took no time for referee Arthur Mercante Jr. (USA) to wave the bout off, as Johnson, 43-3 (28) with 1 no-contest, proved he again deserves a spot near the top of the junior bantamweight bunch.

Promoter: Cedric Kushner Promotions

(3-6-04)

Ted Bodenrader

Johnny Bredahl W 12 Nobuaki Naka

Copenhagen, Denmark: Mogens Palle, the promoter who has done so much for Danish boxing over many years, turned 70 a few hours later, so it was only fitting that Bredahl, 118, Denmark, should produce another accomplished display of boxing against Naka, 118, Japan, to retain the WBA bantamweight title by unanimous decision at the Brondby Hallen. It was the Dane's third defense of a belt he won from Venezuela's Eidy Moya by ninth-round stoppage in April 2002.

In almost 60 fights, Bredahl has been defeated only twice. In December 1995, Wayne McCullough stopped him in eight rounds, and in March '00, Paulie Ayala picked up a close decision against the Dane. The WBA belt that Ayala kept that night is strapped around Bredahl's waist now, and, even at 35, he remains too good for the likes of Naka, 17-1-2 (11), the Japanese champion who made seven defenses of his national title prior to breaking his collarbone in a car accident that kept him out of the ring for 10 months before his return last year.

Bredahl's slick movement and long reach, which he capitalized on fully with sustained, accurate usage of his left jab, proved the telling factors. The 25-year-old challenger was willing and battled throughout to get inside, where he was able to inflict damage at close quarters. But it was a losing battle. Bredahl was too savvy, too much on his game, and Naka, though brave, was too limited to knock him out of his stride.

Boxing and moving well behind his jab, Bredahl comfortably claimed the first three rounds before catching Naka with a solid left hook in the fourth that sent the Japanese fighter to the floor. It was the only knockdown of the fight, but it emphasized Bredahl's superiority.

Naka did fight back well in the sixth, landing several left hooks and hard bodyshots designed to slow down the constantly moving titleholder, in the way that McCullough managed almost a decade before. But Naka has nothing of "The Pocket Rocket's" work rate, and Bredahl was able to regain command by re-asserting his jab.

He did become more ragged down the stretch, slipping to the canvas in the ninth and taking a breather on the seat of his pants after a shot from Naka strayed low in the 10th. Referee Mark Nelson (USA) warned the challenger, but did not deduct a point. Over the final two rounds, Naka tried to exploit Bredahl's increasing weariness, but the tall veteran had enough guile to avoid the most serious dangers.

All three judges had Bredahl, 55-2 (26), well ahead: Daniel Talon (France) saw it 117-112, Ricardo Duncan (Panama) 117-111, and Silvestre Abainza (Philippines) 118-109. THE RING had it 117-110 for Bredahl. And Palle had a happy birthday.

Promoter: Mogens and Bettina Palle in association with Akihiko Honda's Teiken Promotions

(3-13-04)

Brian Doogan

Veerapol Sahaprom W 12 Toshiaki Nishioka

Saitama, Japan: Skillful Thailander Veerapol, 118, finally ended a tetralogy against top contender Nishioka, 118, Japan, as the champ retained the WBC bantam title via unanimous decision after 12 gory rounds at the Super Arena.

Japanese southpaw Nishioka, in his fourth encounter with Veerapol (the last two were draws, the first a close points win for the beltholder), made a good start, winning the first two rounds with his solid lefts to the titlist's face. In the third round, each boxer suffered a gash following an accidental clash of heads, and both were penalized one point in accordance with the WBC's rules. But the 27-year-old Nishioka's cut was much more severe than Veerapol's, and he kept streaming blood from that point onward. Nishioka, 23-4-3 (14), fought well for the most part, swapping punches toe-to-toe in the center of the ring, but Veerapol, 42-1-2 (29), was significantly more accurate.

Judge Marty Denkin (USA) scored it 116-110, Richard Flaherty (USA) saw it 117-109, and Gelasio Perez (Mexico) had the fight 118-109, all for the 35-year-old Thailander, who was making his 12th title defense. The referee was Laurence Cole (USA).

Promoter: Akihiko Honda's Teiken Promotions

(3-6-04)

Joe Koizumi

PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Veerapol blasts Nishioka with a straight right

Oscar Larios W 12 Shigeru Nakazato

Saitama, Japan: Hard-punching Mexican Larios, 122, successfully defended the WBC 122-pound belt for the fourth time as he defeated Japanese bonecrusher Nakazato, 121½, by unanimous decision over 12 heats at the Super Arena.

It was a grudge fight, as the two combatants had first met in April '03, with Larios winning a unanimous decision despite suffering a broken jaw. In the rematch, Larios, 27, kept up a steady jab and threw numerous left-right combinations to pile up the points against the peek-a-boo stylist. In round five, Nakazato, 31, turned loose and scored with solid left hooks, and one such punch opened a cut over the titleholder's left eyebrow, prompting Larios to retaliate with wild swings.

Larios went all out to batter the Japanese challenger in the sixth and ninth, but he couldn't drop his tough rival. Still, Nakazato, 24-7 (18), had little answer for Larios' abundant and incessant combinations, and the scoring was ultimately one-sided. Hubert Minn (USA) scored it 118-109, Dalby Shirley (USA) had it 120-107, and David Chung (Korea) saw it 116-112, all for Larios, 51-3-1 (35), who is gunning for a showdown against Manny Pacquiao. The referee was Richie Davies (England), who did a good job in controlling the rough-and-tumble slugfest.

Promoter: Akihiko Honda's Teiken Promotions

(3-6-04)

Joe Koizumi

PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Larios goes two-for-two against Nakazato

Scott Harrison KO 5 Walter Estrada

Glasgow, Scotland: Deficiencies in defense aside, Harrison, 125½, Scotland, once more looked a formidable force at featherweight, absorbing some shots against Estrada, 125¼, Colombia, but taking him apart inside five rounds at the Braehead Arena. The Colombian southpaw was a late replacement for the injured William Abelyan, the California-based Armenian who would have been a more intriguing challenge for the stone-hard Scot.

All of the strength and power that the 26-year-old Harrison somehow manages to pack into his 126-pound frame virtually guarantees

him superiority in the type of engagement that Estrada initiated. The Colombian was certainly not shy to swing hard and frequently with solid punches, some of which stunned Harrison, albeit momentarily. But while Estrada's macho nature generated some compelling action, it ultimately proved to be his downfall. Not many men in this division would be able to stand punch-for-punch with Harrison, a truth he emphasized against rugged Argentinean Julio Pablo Chacon, brave Irishman Wayne McCullough, and Mexico's Manuel Medina in their rematch.

Estrada, 26-3 (18), made it clear from the opening bell that he had come to fight, catching Harrison several times, though not with any alarming effect. What distinguishes Harrison, 21-2-1 (11), at this weight is the power differential. Even though he was under pretty constant fire, with Estrada mixing it well to head and body, he was never in real danger. This was his territory, a slugging match. A hard left hook and another heavy right hurt the 29-year-old Estrada in the second round. He took the punches well, but they registered, and he sustained a cut by the right eye before the round was out. However, he did hit back with a left that seemed to stun Harrison, forcing him to take several steps back shortly before the bell intervened.

The left hand was the southpaw's most dangerous weapon, particularly when he wielded it as an uppercut. Harrison was being forced to dig in and, inspired by a crowd that started the singing of "Flower Of Scotland," he did just that, his eagerness for the fight causing him to be warned for a low blow by American referee Genaro Rodriguez, who ignored some low blows coming the other way.

Legitimate punches from Harrison were beginning to break down the South American's resistance by the fourth round. Under the pressure, Estrada went down, but Rodriguez ruled it a slip. Then Harrison drove in two hard lefts near the end of the round and Estrada went down again, and this time the referee issued an eight-count.

Harrison attacked from the start of the fifth, landing a straight right and then an assault of wicked hooks before he finished with an uppercut as Estrada fell to the floor. The now heavily outgunned Colombian was up at eight, but he was there for the taking. Harrison needed no invitation. A flurry of blows put Estrada down again, and the referee rightly waved it over at the 1:03 mark.

Promoter: Sports Network

(3-6-04)

Brian Doogan

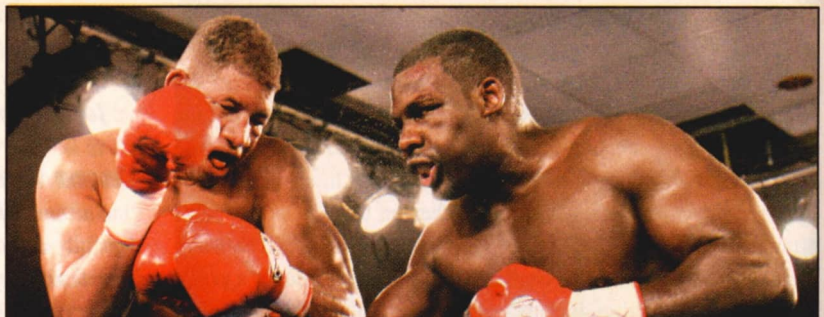


PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Unimpressive Rahman fires a right at Cole's body

Hasim Rahman W 10 Al Cole

Glen Burnie, Maryland: Baltimore's hometown hero returned to his roots, fighting at the locally acclaimed "Ballroom Boxing At Michael's 8th Avenue," but as anyone who witnessed the surprisingly competitive bout will tell you, the former world heavyweight champion's skills need to go back to their roots as well, to be stripped bare and totally reshaped.

The 31-year-old Rahman, 255, Las Vegas, Nevada, via Baltimore, Maryland, picked up right where he left off after his hideous hugfest against John Ruiz in December 2003. In the first half of the bout with Cole, he walked straight in without throwing punches, leaving himself available for jabs, left hooks, and short rights. The typically durable former cruiserweight titlist was more than happy to exploit the openings, and Cole, 237, Spring Valley, New York, though not terribly active, still worked hard enough to hold a lead after five rounds. Rahman's weight appeared to be a factor, as he held often—and allowed himself to be held whenever Cole, 39, sought momentary refuge.

The sellout crowd voiced its displeasure until "Rock" started stepping up the pace in the second half. Sensing his fighting future slipping away, he stalked Cole with renewed vigor in the seventh, punishing him with a couple of hard rights and lefts to the head. The New Yorker stood fast, though, and fought back in an exchange that elicited excitement from the crowd.

Rahman took Cole to task again in the ninth, and a flurry momentarily pushed his opponent through the third and fourth ropes with his back turned (American referee Malik Waleed rightly did not call a knockdown). The punches and poundage had worn down the lighter Cole, and his open-mouth breathing had become more labored as the night wore on. Rahman hurt Cole, 34-13-3 (16), badly with a left and right in the 10th, but he lacked the stamina to finish the job, and broke his own momentum with inopportune clinches.

At the final bell, the victorious Rahman appeared totally spent, to the point of near nausea. All three judges, John Gradowski (USA), Bill Holmes (USA), and Don Risher (USA), scored the bout 96-94 for Rahman (as did THE RING), and the former champ looked more relieved than happy upon hearing the verdict. He was refreshingly candid about his uninspiring victory, particularly in the wake of his spin-doctor speech following his obvious loss to Ruiz.

"I won, but I'm not happy with this performance. I screwed it up tonight," Rahman said. "I wanted to put on a show for the fans, but I didn't follow my game plan. I thought because he was a former cruiserweight that I could knock him out. The weight was what it was. Next time, I'll come in lighter."

It remains a dubious prospect as to whether the inconsistent Rahman, 36-5-1 (29), can regain the lofty heights of 2001, or even secure a title challenge. To his credit, he plans to stay busy, and was scheduled to fight Terrance Lewis just five weeks later.

Television: Comcast SportsNet

Promoter: Ballroom Boxing

(3-11-04)

Mike Greenhill ■

New Face

(Continued from page 20)

said Anchondo. "My grandfather has always had an impact on my life. He's a very strong man. He brought me up as his son, and my grandfather is my dad, he is. My father had a lot of other kids, and he did the same thing to his other kids as he did to me. He wasn't there. My grandfather came at the right time and picked us up. I don't know where I'd be without my grandfather."

Actually, Anchondo has a pretty good idea. He bounced around quite a bit growing up, raised solely by his mother, Ester Anchondo (Mike took her last name, rather than his father's), in an ongoing carousel of unstable environments. They would move into a new area, and the biggest gang hangout would be either across the street or right around the corner. The lifestyle was so tempting that it scooped up many kids Anchondo's age.

One was Anchondo's cousin, Joshua, with whom he used to be best friends in their youth.

"After my grandfather took me in, my cousin Joshua, a few years later, got involved with the street gangs and was shot in the back," Anchondo recalled. "He's in prison now, until he's 32, because he retaliated and got caught for attempted murder. I hate using him as an example, but that could have been me; that could have easily been me. There isn't one day when I don't thank my grandparents, and it's all working out for the better."

Boxing entered Anchondo's life at a very early age. He had constantly been in trouble in school. He liked to stir up streetfights, or create any other chaos he could get into. Ester finally hit the boiling point. She called the only man she could rely on—her father.

"Mike was out of control," recalled Fred, 67, a retired construction foreman who now works Mike's corner as his cutman. "That's why I took Mike away from my daughter. I was the only one who could control him. He basically wants to forget about the past and think about the future. Had I not even got a hold of him, I think Mike would have wound up in jail. The Lord has been on Mike's side."

As have a few others. Anchondo has been a magnet for goodwill. After a local TV station aired his plight when he was a 10-year-old trying to raise the money to attend a national tournament, Jim Berklas, a retired bank executive, and his wife, Lynn, stepped forward and came to his aid. The Berklases helped Anchondo land at Bishop Amat High, an exclusive private school in La Puente. They're like a second family to Anchondo now, often seated at ringside when he fights.

Another benefactor was Leo MacIntyre, who put up thousands of dollars for Anchondo to get to tournaments all over the country.

Mighty Mike turned pro in 2000, but he stumbled at the start. He was winning, though not in the way his manager, Joel De La Hoya (Oscar's father), liked. Anchondo just wasn't getting any better, and he had a tendency to pose and play in the ring. He'd fire off a flurry of punches, then put his hands down and mock his opponent, or stick his chin out and dare his foe to take his best shot.

For Anchondo, it wasn't a big deal.

"I love playing in the ring; the ring is my office," Anchondo said. "I wouldn't call it cockiness. I like selling myself. If I'm going against someone, I have to try and psych them out a little. You have to make things interesting."

Others, however, saw it differently. Joe Hernandez was asked by Joel De La Hoya to join Anchondo's camp as an adviser and supervise his training alongside Anchondo's regular trainer, Clemente Medina. Hernandez was in Anchondo's corner for the Vargas fight, leading to a distinct change from what fans had previously seen.

"Mike wasn't attracting the public to his fighting style," Hernandez said. "I liked the charisma Mike had, but he was a runner. He had a fairly good offense and a fairly good defense, and he had talent. But that wasn't brought out because of his showboating, keeping his hands down, sticking his chin out, and doing a lot of slapping. We wanted Mike to start executing his punches and show what he could do."

Anchondo hopes the Vargas fight will launch him into the consciousness of more boxing fans. The showboating was eliminated, replaced by short, exacting punching.

"Joe knows my power and he wanted me to come out in the first three rounds and just demolish him," Anchondo said. "But I didn't have enough confidence in doing what Joe wanted me to do. I wasn't really confident with the new style, but I gained a lot of confidence in the Vargas fight. I surprised myself the way I performed. Things came out that I didn't think would come out. I changed the predictions."

It's a good thing Fred Anchondo was there to change other predictions first. ■

PHOTO BY JORGE GARCIA

Anchondo fires a right at Angel Rios en route to a unanimous decision win

ALPHABET RATINGS

The Rankings of Boxing's Three International Governing Bodies

WBA RATINGS
(Ratings as of March 2004)

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Champ: John Ruiz (USA)
1. Vitali Klitschko (UKR)
2. Corrie Sanders (SA)
3. Wladimir Klitschko (UKR)
4. Hasim Rahman (USA)
5. David Tua (NZ)
6. James Toney (USA)
7. Joe Mesi (USA)
8. Lance Whitaker (USA)
9. Nicolay Valuev (RUS)
10. Lamon Brewster (USA)
11. Evander Holyfield (USA)
12. Fres Oquendo (PR)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Champ: Jean Marc Mormeck (FRA)
1. Valery Brudov (RUS)
2. Vacant
3. Virgil Hill (USA)
4. O'Neil Bell (USA)
5. Vassiliy Jirov (KAZ)
6. Pietro Aurino (ITA)
7. Vincenzo Cantatore (ITA)
8. Guillermo Jones (PAN)
9. Thomas Hansvoll (NOR)
10. Dale Brown (CAN)
11. Luis Pineda (PAN)
12. Kelvin Davis (USA)

LT. HEAVYWEIGHTS
Unified Champ: Roy Jones (USA)
Champ: Fabrice Tiozzo (FRA)
1. Dariusz Michalczewski (GER)
2. Antonio Tarver (USA)
3. Mehdi Sahnoune (FRA)
4. Silvio Branco (ITA)
5. George Jones (USA)
6. Paul Briggs (AUSTRL)
7. Thomas Ulrich (GER)
8. Bruno Girard (FRA)
9. Stipe Drews (CRO)
10. Hugo Hernan Garay (ARG)
11. Danny Batchelder (USA)
12. Paul Murdoch (AUSTRL)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Unified Champ: Sven Ottke (GER)
Champ: Anthony Mundine (AUSTRL)
1. Manuel Siaca (PR)
2. Mads Larsen (DEN)
3. Mikkel Kessler (DEN)
4. Jeff Lacy (USA)
5. Antwun Echols (USA)
6. Byron Mitchell (USA)
7. Brian Magee (GB)
8. Danilo Haussler (GER)
9. Nordin Ben-Salah (NETH)
10. Tito Mendoza (PAN)
11. Charles Brewer (USA)
12. Mario Veit (GER)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Unified Champ: Bernard Hopkins (USA)
1. Vacant
2. Bert Schenk (GER)
3. Robert Allen (USA)
4. Maselino Masoe (AUSTRL)
5. Evans Ashira (DEN)
6. Jermain Taylor (USA)
7. Kingsley Ikeke (NIG)
8. Howard Eastman (GB)
9. William Joppy (USA)
10. Marcos Silvano Diaz (ARG)
11. Kelly Pavlik (USA)
12. Raymond Joval (NETH)

SUPER WELTERWEIGHTS
Unified Champ: Winky Wright (USA)
Champ: Travis Simms (USA)
1. Oscar De La Hoya (USA)
2. Fernando Vargas (USA)
3. Kassim Ouma (GHA)
4. Shane Mosley (USA)
5. Alejandro Garcia (MEX)
6. Rhoshii Wells (USA)
7. Verno Phillips (USA)
8. Santiago Samaniego (PAN)
9. Mamadou Thiam (FRA)
10. Roman Karmazin (RUS)
11. J.C. Candelo (COL)
12. Shannan Taylor (AUSTRL)

WELTERWEIGHTS
Unified Champ: Cory Spinks (USA)
Champ: Jose Rivera (USA)
1. Ricardo Mayorga (NIC)
2. Thomas Damgaard (DEN)
3. Carlos Baldomir (ARG)
4. Vernon Forrest (USA)
5. Michael Trabant (GER)
6. Kermit Cintron (PR)
7. Farhad Bakirov (UZB)
8. Teddy Reid (USA)
9. Chris Smith (USA)
10. Cosme Rivera (MEX)
11. Ishe Smith (USA)
12. Carlos Quintana (PR)

SUPER LIGHTWEIGHTS
Unified Champ: Kostya Tszyu (AUSTRL)
Champ: Vivian Harris (GUY)
1. Miguel Cotto (PR)
2. Ricky Hatton (GB)
3. Oktay Urkal (TUR)
4. Francisco Bojado (MEX)
5. Andreas Kotelnik (GER)
6. Carlos Maussa (COL)
7. Diobelys Hurtado (CUB)
8. Terrance Cauthen (USA)
9. Souleyman M'Baye (FRA)
10. DeMarcus Corley (USA)
11. Kelson Pinto (BRA)
12. Masakazu Satake (JAP)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Champ: Vacant
1. Miguel Callist (PAN)
2. Juan Lazcano (USA)
3. Lakva Sim (MON)
4. Prawet Singwangcha (THAI)
5. Julio Diaz (MEX)
6. Michael Clark (USA)
7. Courtney Burton (USA)
8. Jose Luis Castillo (MEX)
9. Billy Irwin (CAN)
10. Juan Diaz (USA)
11. Pedro Miranda (SPA)
12. Artur Grigorian (UZB)

SUPER FEATHERWEIGHTS
Champ: Yodsanan Nanthachai (THAI)
1. Jorge Barrios (ARG)
2. Randy Suico (PHIL)
3. Joel Casamayor (CUB)
4. Janos Nagy (HUN)
5. Michael Gomez (GB)
6. Nobuhito Honmo (JAP)
7. Robbie Peden (AUSTRL)
8. Mike Anchondo (USA)
9. Vicente Mosquera (PAN)
10. Edwin Valero (VEN)
11. Mzonke Fana (SA)
12. Pongsith Wianwiset (THAI)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Unified Champ: Juan Manuel Marquez (MEX)
Champ: Chris John (INDO)
1. Manny Pacquiao (PHIL)
2. Injin Chi (KOR)
3. Takashi Koshimoto (JAP)
4. Derrick Gainer (USA)
5. Michael Brodie (GB)
6. Marco Antonio Barrera (MEX)
7. Spend Abazi (DEN)
8. Osamu Sato (JAP)
9. Victor Polo (COL)
10. Oscar Leon (COL)
11. Orlando Salido (MEX)
12. Zahir Raheem (USA)

SUPER BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Mahyar Monshipour (FRA)
1. Yoddamrong Sithyodthong (THAI)
2. Somsak Sithchachawan (THAI)
3. Tim Austin (USA)
4. Salim Medjkoune (FRA)
5. Yober Ortega (VEN)
6. Paulie Ayala (USA)
7. Celestino Caballero (PAN)
8. Nadel Hussein (AUSTRL)
9. Alejandro Barrera (MEX)
10. Shoji Kimura (JAP)
11. Jorge Linares (VEN)
12. Daniel Ponce-DeLeon (MEX)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Johnny Bredahl (DEN)
1. Julio Zarate (MEX)
2. Poongsawat Krachingdaen (THAI)
3. Diego Morales (MEX)
4. Mauricio Martinez (PAN)
5. Jun Toriumi (JAP)
6. Joichiro Tatsuyoshi (JAP)
7. Leo Gamez (VEN)
8. Wladimir Sidorenko (UKR)
9. Ricardo Cordova (PAN)
10. Hideki Todaka (JAP)
11. Nobuaki Naka (JAP)
12. Ricardo Vargas (MEX)

SUPER FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Alexander Munoz (VEN)
1. Martin Castillo (MEX)
2. Eric Morel (USA)
3. Masaki Kawabata (JAP)
4. Katsushige Kawashima (JAP)
5. Fernando Montiel (MEX)
6. Jose Navarro (USA)
7. Hideyasu Ishihara (JAP)
8. Rogelio Galicia (PHIL)
9. Luis Bolano (COL)
10. Felix Machado (VEN)
11. Kormith Eveready (THAI)
12. Reynaldo Lopez Brown (COL)

FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Lorenzo Parra (VEN)
1. Brahim Asloum (FRA)
2. Takefumi Sakata (JAP)
3. Denkaosaen Kaowitch (THAI)
4. Brian Viloria (USA)
5. Hussein Hussein (AUSTRL)
6. Mzukisi Sikali (SA)
7. Cyril Bellanger (FRA)
8. Hiroshi Nakano (JAP)
9. Angel Priolo (COL)
10. Alexander Mahmutov (RUS)
11. Damaen Kelly (GB)
12. Cristian Mijares (MEX)

LIGHT FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Rosendo Alvarez (NIC)
1. Bebis Mendoza (COL)
2. Pichit C. Siriwat (THAI)
3. Edgar Velasquez (VEN)
4. Marvin Tampos (PHIL)
5. Roberto Vazquez (PAN)
6. Masato Hatakeyama (JAP)
7. Shingo Yamaguchi (JAP)
8. Fahlan Sakkreerin (THAI)
9. Mhikiza Myekeni (SA)
10. Tatsuo Hayashida (JAP)
11. Nerys Espinoza (NIC)
12. Manuel Vargas (MEX)

MINIMUMWEIGHTS
Champ: Noel Arambulet (VEN)
1. Juan Landaeta (VEN)
2. Chana Porpaoin (THAI)
3. Heriberto Gejon (PHIL)
4. Jaewon Kim (KOR)
5. Sithembele Kibiti (SA)
6. Rodel Mayol (PHIL)
7. Pornsawan Pramuk (THAI)
8. Yutaka Niida (JAP)
9. Isaac Bustos (MEX)
10. Genki Onaka (JAP)
11. Satoshi Kogumasaka (JAP)
12. Hiroshi Matsumoto (JAP)

WBC RATINGS
(Ratings as of March 2004)

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Champ: Vacant
1. Vitali Klitschko (UKR)
2. Corrie Sanders (SA)
3. Joe Mesi (USA)
4. Juan Carlos Gomez (CUB)
5. James Toney (USA)
6. Hasim Rahman (USA)
7. David Tua (NZ)
8. Mike Tyson (USA)
9. Eliecer Castillo (CUB)
10. Jameel McCline (USA)
11. Henry Akinwande (NIG)
12. Vassiliy Jirov (KAZ)
13. Faruq Saleem (USA)
14. Owen Beck (JAM)
15. Monte Barrett (USA)
16. Dominick Guinn (USA)
17. Derrick Jefferson (USA)
18. Luan Krasniqi (GER)
19. Oleg Maskaev (UZB)
20. Lance Whitaker (USA)
21. Kirk Johnson (CAN)
22. Timo Hoffman (GER)
23. Jeremy Williams (USA)
24. Dennis Bakhtov (KAZ)
25. Sinan Samil San (TUR)
26. Michael Sprott (GB)
27. Marcelo Dominguez (ARG)
28. Samuel Peter (NIG)
29. Peter Okhello (UGA)
30. Kevin McBride (IRE)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Champ: Wayne Braithwaite (GUY)
1. O'Neil Bell (USA)
2. Pietro Aurino (ITA)
3. Dale Brown (CAN)
4. Rydell Booker (USA)
5. Rudiger May (GER)
6. Vincenzo Cantatore (ITA)
7. Pavel Melkomian (RUS)
8. Krysztov Wlodarczyk (POL)
9. Carl Thompson (GB)
10. Glen Kelly (AUSTRL)
11. Luis Andres Pineda (PAN)
12. Virgil Hill (USA)
13. Kelvin Davis (USA)
14. Louis Azille (DR)
15. Vincenzo Rossitto (ITA)
16. Valery Brudov (RUS)
17. Sebastiaan Rothman (SA)
18. Richard LaMontagne (USA)
19. Alexander Gurov (UKR)
20. Felix Cora (USA)
21. Ezra Sellers (USA)
22. Baldwin Hlongwane (SA)
23. Thomas Hansvoll (NOR)
24. Alexander Petkovic (GER)
25. Mark Hobson (GB)
26. Michael Simms (USA)
27. Daniel Rowsell (AUSTRL)
28. Jorge Kahwagi (MEX)
29. Mauro Ordiales (ARG)
30. James Elizalde (USA)

LT. HEAVYWEIGHTS
Champ: Roy Jones (USA)
1. Antonio Tarver (USA)
2. Paul Briggs (AUSTRL)
3. Stipe Drews (CRO)
4. Thomas Ulrich (GER)
5. Dariusz Michalczewski (GER)
6. Jesus Ruiz (MEX)
7. Tomasz Adamek (POL)
8. Elvir Muriqi (ALB)
9. George Jones (USA)
10. Julio Gonzalez (MEX)
11. Rico Hoye (USA)
12. Dan Batchelder (USA)
13. Kamel Amrane (FRA)
14. Matthew Barney (GB)
15. Daniel Judah (USA)
16. Orlando Rivera (PR)
17. Jorge Castro (ARG)
18. Laudelino Barros (BRA)
19. Eric Harding (USA)
20. Montell Griffin (USA)
21. Silvio Branco (ITA)
22. Robert Stieglitz (GER)
23. Hugo Garay (ARG)
24. Mehdi Sahnoune (FRA)
25. Donnell Wiggins (USA)
26. Peter Oboh (GB)
27. Troy Weaver (USA)
28. Sergey Karanevich (RUS)
29. Adrian Diaconu (CAN)
30. Prince Badi Ajamu (USA)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Champ: Markus Beyer (GER)
Interim Champ: Danny Green (AUSTRL)
1. Mikkel Kessler (DEN)
2. Eric Lucas (CAN)
3. Mads Larsen (DEN)
4. Danilo Haussler (GER)
5. Jeff Lacy (USA)
6. Tito Mendoza (PAN)
7. Charles Brewer (USA)
8. Scott Pemberton (USA)
9. Brian Magee (GB)
10. Syd Vanderpool (CAN)
11. Kabary Salem (EGY)
12. Rudy Markussen (DEN)
13. Antwun Echols (USA)
14. Robin Reid (GB)
15. Nader Hamdan (AUSTRL)
16. Henry Porras (CR)
17. Otis Grant (CAN)
18. Mario Veit (GER)
19. Jean Paul Mendy (FRA)
20. Enrique Ornelas (USA)
21. Andre Thysse (SA)
22. Librado Andrade (USA)
23. Willie Stewart (USA)
24. Victor Oganov (RUS)
25. Carmine Tufano (USA)
26. Vitaly Tsypko (UKR)
27. Manny Siaca (PR)
28. Charles Adamu (GHA)
29. Jerry Elliott (NIG)
30. Jackson Chanet (FRA)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Champ: Bernard Hopkins (USA)
1. Howard Eastman (GB)
2. Cristian Sanavia (ITA)
3. Jermain Taylor (USA)
4. Kuvanych Toygonbayev (UZB)
5. Evans Ashira (KEN)
6. Kingsley Ikeke (CAN)
7. Sam Soliman (AUSTRL)
8. Eric Mitchell (USA)
9. Robert Allen (USA)
10. Raymond Joval (HOL)
11. Sergey Tatevosyan (RUS)
12. Quentin Smith (USA)
13. Epifanio Mendoza (COL)
14. Jorge Sendra (SPA)
15. Bert Schenk (GER)
16. Mariano Carrera (ARG)
17. Kelly Pavlik (USA)
18. Leonard Pierre Anastan (HAI)
19. Yoshihiro Araki (JAP)
20. Willie Gibbs (USA)
21. Wayne Alexander (GB)
22. Morrade Hakkar (FRA)
23. Daniel Edouard (USA)
24. Chad Dawson (USA)
25. Marcos Silvano Diaz (ARG)
26. Alexey Chirkov (RUS)
27. James Obedi Toney (GHA)
28. Tokutaro Toyozumi (JAP)
29. Jesse Brinkley (USA)
30. Troy Rowland (USA)

SUPER WELTERWEIGHTS
Champ: Winky Wright (USA)
Interim Champ: Javier Castillejo (SPA)
1. Fernando Vargas (USA)
2. Shane Mosley (USA)
3. Kassim Ouma (USA)
4. Roman Karmazin (RUS)
5. Sergio Martinez (ARG)
6. Sergei Dzindziruk (UKR)
7. Marco Antonio Rubio (MEX)
8. Alex Bunema (USA)
9. Kofi Jantuah (GHA)
10. Michele Piccirillo (ITA)
11. J.C. Candelo (COL)
12. Tokunbo Olajide (CAN)
13. Toshiharu Kaneyama (JAP)
14. Raul Marquez (USA)
15. Aslan Kodzoev (RUS)
16. Jamie Moore (GB)
17. Verno Phillips (USA)
18. Nobuhiro Hishida (JAP)
19. Richard Williams (GB)
20. Alejandro Garcia (MEX)
21. Mihaly Kotai (HUN)
22. Fitz Vanderpool (CAN)
23. Christophe Canclaux (FRA)
24. Shannan Taylor (AUSTRL)
25. Anderson Clayton (BRZ)
26. Jimmy Colas (FRA)
27. Mehrdud Takaloo (GB)
28. Rodney Jones (USA)
29. Joachim Alcine (CAN)
30. Jose Luis Zertuche (MEX)

WELTERWEIGHTS
Champ: Cory Spinks (USA)
1. Thomas Damgaard (DEN)
2. Ricardo Mayorga (NIC)
3. Vernon Forrest (USA)
4. Carlos Baldomir (ARG)
5. Manuel Gomez (MEX)
6. Miguel Rodriguez (MEX)
7. Hiroshi Watanabe (JAP)
8. Miguel Angel Gonzalez (MEX)
9. Christophe Henry (BAR)
10. Ishe Smith (USA)
11. Jose Luis Cruz (MEX)
12. Alpaslam Aguzum (TUR)
13. Teddy Reid (USA)
14. Jawaid Khaliq (GB)
15. Michel Trabant (GER)
16. Rafael Pineda (COL)
17. Kermit Cintron (USA)
18. Frederic Klose (FRA)
19. Sebastian Lujan (ARG)
20. Christian Bladt (DEN)
21. Joseph Makaringe (SA)
22. Farkhad Bakirov (UZB)
23. Rev Santillan (PHIL)
24. Michele Orlando (ITA)
25. Randall Bailey (USA)
26. James Hare (GB)
27. Chris Smith (USA)
28. Joshua Clottey (GHA)
29. Carlos Quintana (PR)
30. Raul Bejarano (ARG)

SUPER LIGHTWEIGHTS
Emeritus Champ: Kostya Tszyu (AUSTRL)
Champ: Arturo Gatti (CAN)
1. Leonard Dorin (CAN)
2. Gianluca Branco (ITA)
3. Miguel Cotto (PR)
4. Paul Spadafora (USA)
5. Ricky Hatton (GB)
6. James Leija (USA)
7. Francisco Bojado (MEX)
8. Terrance Cauthen (USA)
9. Cosme Rivera (MEX)
10. Lovemore Ndou (SA)
11. Carlos Maussa (COL)
12. Junior Witter (GB)
13. Juan Valenzuela (MEX)
14. DeMarcus Corley (USA)
15. Juan Urango (COL)
16. Masakazu Satake (JAP)
17. Victor Kpadenue (GHA)

18. Wilfredo Vilches (ARG)
19. Jungbum Kim (KOR)
20. Juan Carlos Rodriguez (MEX)
21. Eloy Rojas (VEN)
22. Hector Camacho Jr. (PR)
23. Jose Areli Lopez (MEX)
24. Cesar Bazan (MEX)
25. Andreas Kotelnik (UKR)
26. Alvaro Aguilar (MEX)
27. Muhammad Abdullaev (UZB)
28. Salvatore Battaglia (ITA)
29. Shingo Eguchi (JAP)
30. Noel Cortez (MEX)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Champ: Floyd Mayweather (USA)
1. Juan Lazcano (USA)
2. Jose Luis Castillo (MEX)
3. Kengo Nagashima (JAP)
4. Juan Diaz (MEX)
5. Phillip Ndou (SA)
6. Steve Johnston (USA)
7. Julio Diaz (USA)
8. Michael Clark (USA)
9. Yuri Romanov (UKR)
10. Jason Cook (GB)
11. Julien Lorcy (FRA)
12. Victoriano Sosa (DR)
13. Stefano Zoff (ITA)
14. Matt Zegan (POL)
15. Michele Delli Paoli (ITA)
16. Dennis Laurente (PHIL)
17. Prawet Singwangcha (THAI)
18. Aldo Rios (ARG)
19. Eleazar Contreras (USA)
20. Artur Grigorian (UZB)
21. Cristian Bejarano (MEX)
22. David Burke (GB)
23. Alex Trujillo (PR)
24. Graham Earl (GB)
25. Antonio Pitalua (COL)
26. Ernesto Zepeda (MEX)
27. Ricardo Silva (ARG)
28. Billy Irwin (CAN)
29. Rolando Reyes (USA)
30. Chad Brisson (CAN)

SUPER FEATHERWEIGHTS
Champ: Erik Morales (MEX)
1. Mzonke Fana (SA)
2. Randy Suico (PHIL)
3. Jesus Chavez (USA)
4. Sirimongkol Singmanassuk (THAI)
5. Zahir Raheem (USA)
6. Mike Anchondo (USA)
7. Boris Sinitsin (RUS)
8. Nobuto Honmo (JAP)
9. Robbie Peden (AUSTRL)
10. Janos Nagy (HUN)
11. Joel Casamayor (CUB)
12. Fernando Trejo (MEX)
13. Julio Pablo Chacon (ARG)
14. Orlando Salido (MEX)
15. Nate Campbell (USA)
16. Jorge Barrios (ARG)
17. Miguel Angel Huerta (MEX)
18. Edwin Valero (VEN)
19. Steve Luevano (USA)
20. Daniel Dominguez (MEX)
21. Goyo Vargas (MEX)
22. Michael Gomez (GB)
23. Jose Cotto (PR)
24. Craig Docherty (GB)
25. Julio Garcia (MEX)
26. Leonardo Resendiz (MEX)
27. Koba Gogaladze (GEO)
28. Alex Arthur (GB)
29. Tontcho Tontchev (BUL)
30. Bobby Pacquiao (PHIL)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Champ: Vacant
1. Injin Chi (KOR)
2. Michael Brodie (GB)
3. Rocky Juarez (USA)
4. Marco Antonio Barrera (MEX)
5. Humberto Soto (MEX)
6. Takashi Koshimoto (JAP)
7. Nicky Cook (GB)
8. Spend Abazi (DEN)
9. Juan Carlos Ramirez (MEX)
10. William Abelyan (USA)
11. Frankie Archuleta (USA)
12. Hector Velazquez (MEX)
13. Guty Espadas (MEX)
14. Derrick Gainer (USA)
15. Valdemir Pereira (BRA)
16. Luis Fuente (MEX)
17. Osamu Sato (JAP)
18. Jorge Solis (MEX)
19. Willie Jorrin (USA)
20. Vuyani Bungu (SA)
21. Daniel Maldonado (USA)
22. Cyril Thomas (FRA)
23. Gamaliel Diaz (MEX)
24. Manuel Calvo (SPA)
25. Osamanu Akaba (GHA)
26. Tommy Browne (AUSTRL)
27. Whyber Garcia (PAN)
28. Dainoshin Kuma (JAP)
29. Eiichi Sugama (JAP)
30. Carlos Gamez (MEX)

SUPER BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Oscar Larios (MEX)
1. Nadel Hussein (AUSTRL)
2. Napapol Kiattisakchocchoi (THAI)
3. Yoshikane Nakajima (JAP)
4. Daniel Ponce (MEX)
5. Jimrex Jaca (PHIL)
6. Jose Rojas (VEN)
7. Shigeru Nakazato (JAP)
8. Akihiro Kanai (JAP)
9. Paulie Ayala (USA)
10. Salim Medjkoune (FRA)
11. Jorge Linares (VEN)
12. Seungsok Chae (KOR)
13. Hector Julio Avila (DR)
14. Kozo Ishii (JAP)
15. Art Simonyan (USA)
16. Manabu Fukushima (JAP)
17. Fernando Beltran Jr. (MEX)
18. Esham Pickering (GB)
19. Ruben Estanislao (MEX)
20. Adolfo Landeros (MEX)
21. Junichi Watanabe (JAP)
22. Cuauhtemoc Vargas (MEX)
23. Masakazu Sugawara (JAP)
24. Sergio Medina (ARG)
25. Andy Cabrera (MEX)
26. Sammy Ventura (MEX)
27. Michael Hunter (GB)
28. Alejandro Barrera (MEX)
29. Yuta Nagai (JAP)
30. Armando Guerrero (USA)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Veerapol Sahaprom (THAI)
1. Diego Morales (MEX)
2. Genaro Garcia (USA)
3. Adonis Rivas (NIC)
4. Hozumi Hasegawa (JAP)
5. Ricardo Vargas (MEX)
6. Jhonny Gonzalez (MEX)
7. Joichiro Tatsuyoshi (JAP)
8. Mauricio Martinez (PAN)
9. Vusi Malinga (SA)
10. Jorge Lacierva (MEX)
11. David Guerault (FRA)
12. Noel Wilders (GB)
13. Gerardo Martinez (MEX)
14. Julio Cesar Avila (MEX)
15. Toshiaki Nishioka (JAP)
16. Heriberto Ruiz (MEX)
17. Silence Mabuza (SA)
18. Franklin Theran (COL)
19. Khulile Makeba (SA)
20. Steve Molitor (CAN)
21. Wladimir Sidorenko (UKR)
22. Saenghiran Lookbanyai (THAI)
23. Jun Toriumi (JAP)
24. Sasha Baktin (RUS)
25. Miguel Angel Munguia (MEX)
26. Akihiko Nago (JAP)
27. Francisco Mateos (MEX)
28. Eduardo Escobedo (MEX)
29. Celestino Caballero (PAN)
30. Cesar Morales (MEX)

SUPER FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Masamori Tokuyama (JAP)
1. Jose Navarro (USA)
2. Malcolm Tunacao (PHIL)
3. Hideyasu Ishihara (JAP)
4. Dimitri Kirilov (RUS)
5. Martin Castillo (MEX)
6. Fernando Montiel (MEX)
7. Reynaldo Hurtado (COL)
8. Hussein Hussein (AUSTRL)
9. Katsushige Kawashima (JAP)
10. Medgoen Singsurat (THAI)
11. Joven Jorda (PHIL)
12. Luis Bolano (COL)
13. Chatchai Sasakul (THAI)
14. Gerson Guerrero (MEX)
15. Hugo Ramirez (MEX)
16. Masaki Kawabata (JAP)
17. Ricardo Cordoba (PAN)
18. Alex Becerra (USA)
19. Waenpetch Chuwatana (THAI)
20. Ivan Hernandez (MEX)
21. Mauricio Pastrana (COL)
22. Oscar Andrade (MEX)
23. Raul Juarez (MEX)
24. Jose Beranza (MEX)
25. Cyril Bellanger (FRA)
26. Sergio Perez (MEX)
27. Karim Quibir (SPA)
28. Shin Ogata (JAP)
29. Sergio Santillan (ARG)
30. Jason Booth (GB)

FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Pongsaklek Wonjongkam (THAI)
1. Luis Maldonado (MEX)
2. Takefumi Sakata (JAP)
3. Noriyuki Komatsu (JAP)
4. Brian Viloria (USA)
5. Hiroshi Nakano (JAP)
6. Tomas Rojas (MEX)
7. Jair Jimenez (COL)
8. Eric Morel (PR)
9. Hidenobu Honda (JAP)
10. Brahim Asloum (FRA)
11. Vic Darchinyan (AUSTRL)
12. Diosdado Gabi (PHIL)
13. Evert Briceno (NIC)
14. Koji Koyama (JAP)
15. Angel Priolo (COL)
16. Daisuke Naito (JAP)
17. Masaki Nakanuma (JAP)
18. Alexander Mahmutov (RUS)
19. Carlos Bouchan (MEX)
20. Raul Eliseo Medina (ARG)
21. Damaen Kelly (GB)
22. Jose Lopez Bueno (SPA)
23. Steffen Norskov (DEN)
24. Luis Angel Martinez (MEX)
25. Julio Ler (ARG)
26. Gabriel Elizondo (USA)
27. Jose Araiza (MEX)
28. Atsushi Mando (JAP)
29. Mercurio Ciaramitaro (ITA)
30. Khunsuk Lukprabat (THAI)

LIGHT FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Jorge Arce (MEX)
1. Juanito Rubillar (PHIL)
2. Masato Hatakeyama (JAP)
3. Eric Ortiz (MEX)
4. Roberto Vazquez (PAN)
5. Manuel Vargas (MEX)
6. Melchor Cob Castro (MEX)
7. Shingo Yamaguchi (JAP)
8. Tatsuo Hayashida (JAP)
9. Ulises Solis (MEX)
10. Jesus Martinez (MEX)
11. Yosam Choi (KOR)
12. Marvin Tampos (PHIL)
13. Sarikalek O. Eakarin (THAI)
14. Nerys Espinoza (NIC)
15. Edgar Sosa (MEX)
16. Omar Nino (MEX)
17. Rafael Lozano (SPA)
18. Monelisi Myekeni (SA)
19. Jaewon Kim (KOR)
20. Andrea Sarritzu (ITA)
21. Hugo Cazares (MEX)
22. Carlos Fajardo (NIC)
23. Javier Lagos (MEX)
24. Juan Centeno (NIC)
25. Bert Batawang (PHIL)
26. Wendyl Janiola (PHIL)
27. Ernesto Castro (NIC)
28. Jose Lopez (PR)
29. Nobuaki Masuda (JAP)
30. Munetsugu Kayo (JAP)

STRAWWEIGHTS
Champ: Eagle Akakura (JAP)
1. Isaac Bustos (MEX)
2. Jose Antonio Aguirre (MEX)
3. Rodel Mayol (PHIL)
4. Heriberto Gijon (PHIL)
5. Roberto Leyva (MEX)
6. Satoshi Kogumasaka (JAP)
7. Mohamed Rachman (INDO)
8. Juan Palacios (NIC)
9. Sithembele Kibiti (SA)
10. Oledong Sithsanerchai (THAI)
11. Armand de la Cruz (PHIL)
12. Genki Ohnaka (JAP)
13. Omar Soto (MEX)
14. Lorenzo Trejo (MEX)
15. Hiroshi Matsumoto (JAP)
16. Noel Tunacao (PHIL)
17. Pornsawan Porpramook (THAI)
18. Teruo Misawa (JAP)
19. Francisco Rosas (MEX)
20. Miguel Telliz (NIC)
21. Sizwe Sinyabi (SA)
22. Namchai Ratanachaigym (THAI)
23. Ricardo San Martin (MEX)
24. Gerardo Verde (MEX)
25. Iwan Key (INDO)
26. Makoto Suzuki (JAP)
27. Nkosinathi Joyi (SA)
28. Shunsuke Nagao (JAP)
29. Valentin Leon (MEX)
30. Emilio Aguelican (MEX)

IBF RATINGS
(Ratings as of March 2004)

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Champ: Chris Byrd (USA)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. David Tua (NZ)
4. Jameel McCline (USA)
5. James Toney (USA)
6. Hasim Rahman (USA)
7. Juan Carlos Gomez (USA)
8. Joe Mesi (USA)
9. Lance Whitaker (USA)
10. Michael Moorer (USA)
11. Kirk Johnson (CAN)
12. Henry Akinwande (GB)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Champ: Vacant
1. Kelvin Davis (USA)
2. Vacant
3. Vassiliy Jirov (KAZ)
4. Ezra Sellers (USA)
5. O'Neil Bell (USA)
6. Vincenzo Cantatore (ITA)
7. Alexander Gurov (UKR)
8. Luis Pineda (PAN)
9. Ravea Springs (USA)
10. Virgil Hill (USA)
11. Louis Azille (USA)
12. Dale Brown (CAN)

LT. HEAVYWEIGHTS
Champ: Glencoffe Johnson (USA)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Antonio Tarver (USA)
4. Montell Griffin (USA)
5. Thomas Ulrich (GER)
6. Clinton Woods (GB)
7. Richard Hall (USA)
8. Julio Gonzalez (USA)
9. Paul Briggs (AUSTRL)
10. Dariusz Michalczewski (POL)
11. Stipe Drews (CRO)
12. Tomasz Adamek (POL)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Champ: Sven Ottke (GER)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Mads Larsen (DEN)
4. Danilo Haussler (GER)
5. Mikkel Kessler (DEN)
6. Charles Brewer (USA)
7. Syd Vanderpool (CAN)
8. Jeff Lacy (USA)
9. Tito Mendoza (PAN)
10. Mario Veit (GER)
11. Robin Reid (GB)
12. Vitaly Tsypko (UKR)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Champ: Bernard Hopkins (USA)
1. Robert Allen (USA)
2. Raymond Joval (HOL)
3. Jermain Taylor (USA)
4. Sam Soliman (AUSTRL)
5. Bert Schenk (GER)
6. Howard Eastman (GB)
7. Evans Ashira (GUY)
8. Derrell Coley (USA)
9. Cristian Sanavia (ITA)
10. Bea Diallo (LIB)
11. Angel Hernandez (USA)
12. Kelly Pavlik (USA)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Champ: Winky Wright (USA)
1. Kassim Ouma (USA)
2. Verno Phillips (USA)
3. Roman Karmazin (RUS)
4. Vernon Forrest (USA)
5. J.C. Candelo (USA)
6. Fernando Vargas (USA)
7. Shannan Taylor (AUSTRL)
8. Julio Garcia (USA)
9. Alex Bunema (USA)
10. Tokundo Olajide (USA)
11. Alejandro Garcia (MEX)
12. Bronco McKart (USA)

WELTERWEIGHTS
Champ: Cory Spinks (USA)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Teddy Reid (USA)
4. Rafael Pineda (COL)
5. Cosme Rivera (MEX)
6. Kermit Cintron (USA)
7. Thomas Damgaard (DEN)
8. Jose Celaya (USA)
9. Ishe Smith (USA)
10. James Hare (ENG)
11. Christian Bladt (DEN)
12. Hercules Kyvelos (CAN)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
Champ: Kostya Tszyu (AUSTRL)
Interim Champ: Sharmba Mitchell (USA)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Mike Stewart (USA)
4. Miguel Cotto (USA)
5. Ricky Hatton (ENG)
6. Lovemore Ndou (AUSTRL)
7. James Leija (USA)
8. Diobelys Hurtado (USA)
9. DeMarcus Corley (USA)
10. Paul Spadafora (USA)
11. Oktay Urkal (TUR)
12. Omar Weis (ARG)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Champ: Javier Jauregui (MEX)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Juan Lazcano (USA)
4. Levander Johnson (USA)
5. Courtney Burton (USA)
6. Julio Diaz (USA)
7. Michael Clark (USA)
8. Julien Lorcy (FRA)
9. Juan Gomez Trinidad (PR)
10. Jose Luis Castillo (MEX)
11. Steve Johnston (USA)
12. Steve Quinones (USA)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
Champ: Carlos Hernandez (USA)
1. Vacant
2. Nate Campbell (USA)
3. Steve Forbes
4. Jorge Barrios (ARG)
5. Joel Casamayor (USA)
6. Sirimongkol Singmanassak (THAI)
7. Robbie Peden (AUSTRL)
8. David Santos (USA)
9. Phillip Ndou (SA)
10. Janos Nagy (HUN)
11. Mike Anchondo (USA)
12. Michael Gomez (IRE)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Champ: Juan Manuel Marquez (MEX)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Orlando Salido (MEX)
4. Manny Pacquiao (PHIL)
5. Marco Antonio Barrera (MEX)
6. Zahir Raheem (USA)
7. Rocky Juarez (USA)
8. Fahprakorb Rakkiatgym (THAI)
9. William Abelyan (USA)
10. Victor Polo (COL)
11. Humberto Soto (MEX)
12. Spend Abazi (DEN)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
Champ: Vacant
1. Jose Luis Valbuena (ARG)
2. Vacant
3. Paulie Ayala (USA)
4. Israel Vazquez (MEX)
5. Nadel Hussein (AUSTRL)
6. David Donis (USA)
7. Art Simonyan (USA)
8. Fahsung 3K Battery (THAI)
9. Agapito Sanchez (DR)
10. Salim Medjkoune (FRA)
11. Diego Morales (MEX)
12. Bobby Boy Velardez (USA)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Rafael Marquez (MEX)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Ricardo Vargas (MEX)
4. Genaro Garcia (MEX)
5. Ratanachai Vorapin (THAI)
6. Pete Frissina (USA)
7. David Guerault (FRA)
8. Jorge Lacierva (USA)
9. Heriberto Ruiz (MEX)
10. Mauricio Martinez (PAN)
11. Mauricio Pastrana (PAN)
12. Tim Austin (USA)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Luis Perez (NIC)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Luis Bolano (COL)
4. Martin Castillo (MEX)
5. Jose Navarro (USA)
6. Felix Machado (VEN)
7. Peter Culshaw (ENG)
8. Jason Booth (ENG)
9. Fernando Montiel (MEX)
10. Malcolm Tunacao (PHIL)
11. Julio Zarate (MEX)
12. Dimitri Kirilov (RUS)

FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Irene Pacheco (COL)
1. Vic Darchinian (AUSTRL)
2. Vacant
3. Jair Jimenez (COL)
4. Damaen Kelly (GB)
5. Alejandro Montiel (MEX)
6. Hussein Hussein (LEB)
7. Luis Maldonado (MEX)
8. Eric Morel (PR)
9. Brahim Asloum (FRA)
10. Angel Priolo (COL)
11. Mzukisi Sikali (SA)
12. Hawk Makepula (SA)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Jose Burgos (MEX)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Fahlan Sakreerin (THAI)
4. Eric Ortiz (MEX)
5. Wendyl Janiola (PHIL)
6. Jesus Martinez (MEX)
7. Yosam Choi (KOR)
8. Tatsuo Hatashida (JAP)
9. Alexander Sanchez (PR)
10. Roberto Vasquez (PAN)
11. Jaewon Kim (KOR)
12. Mhikiza Myekeni (SA)

MINI FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Daniel Reyes (COL)
1. Muhammad Rachman (INDO)
2. Vacant
3. Edgar Cardenas (MEX)
4. Pichit Siriwat (THAI)
5. Isaac Bustos (MEX)
6. Noel Tunacao (PHIL)
7. Chana Porpaoin (THAI)
8. Roberto Leyva (MEX)
9. Ernesto Rubillar (PHIL)
10. Rodel Mayol (PHIL)
11. Eriberto Gejon (PHIL)
12. Juan Palacios (NIC)

CLASSIC

From THE RING, October 1988

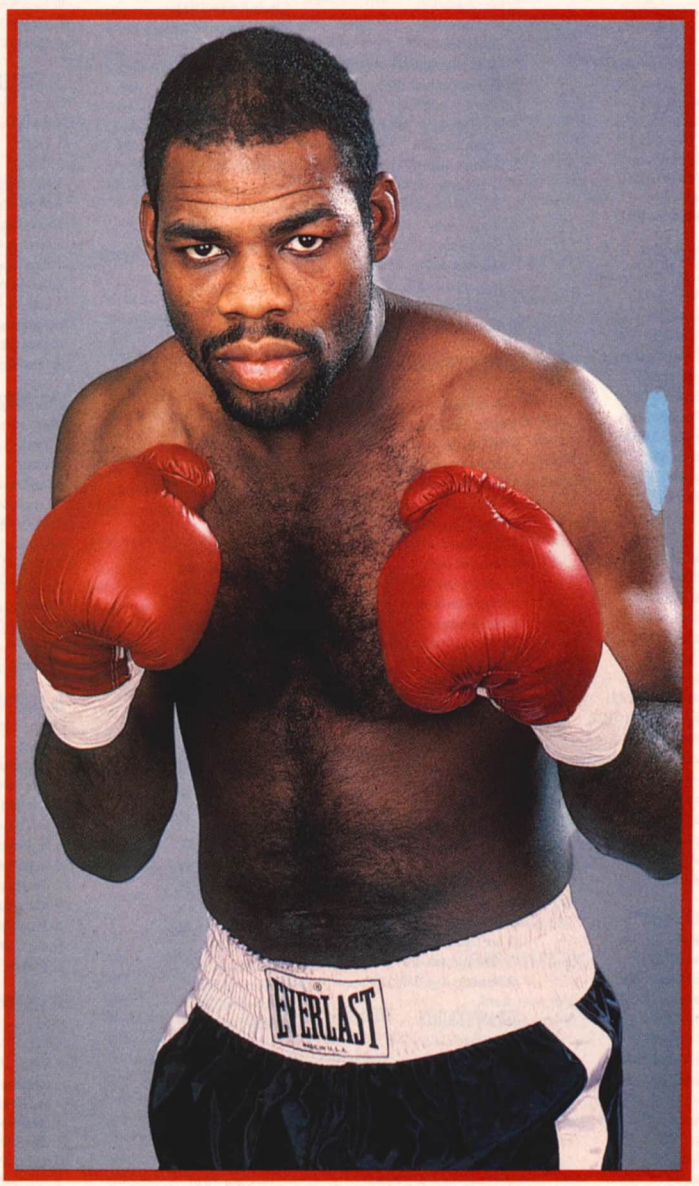
BARKLEY GIVES HEARNS THE BIG CHILL

"Hit Man" Looks To Rematch For Redemption Following Stunning Defeat

By Jack Welsh

Since the dawning when early man had original thoughts while housekeeping in caves, there has been a running debate whether or not it is worthwhile to know your destiny in advance. And while Thomas Hearns is cognizant of his immediate future—a projected rematch with conqueror Iran Barkley—it's certainly not the future he had in mind.

How could Hearns, his connections, and his avid admirers—or even his detractors—have forecast what happened to the angular athlete from Detroit on the inaugural weekend of June? How could most of us have guessed that Hearns, totally in control during the first eight minutes of combat, would suddenly find himself in the twilight zone compliments of two smashing rights from the fists of Barkley? How many seers foresaw the sight of the "Hit Man" twisted on the lower strand, with those trademark arms flailing back over the ring apron at the Las Vegas Hilton Center, where 8,541 spectators reacted like a convention of mutes?



Well, at least one soothsayer called it right on the money. His name? Iran Barkley, of course!

"I plan to finish this man," boasted Barkley 72 hours before he bombed Hearns for the WBC belt. "It's just another fight. There is nowhere for Hearns to go but out. I know Tommy is going to be dangerous in the first four rounds—that's if it goes into the fourth. The man has the title and he's trying to protect it, but I came to Las Vegas to take it. This fight ain't gonna be a decision. It will be a knockout. I just don't know the round. But I

Iran Barkley made a bold prediction that he would stop Thomas "Hit Man" Hearns. "The Blade" backed up his words up by ending Hearns' brief reign as WBC middleweight titleholder in a spectacular manner.

know Iran Barkley will be the one standing with the belt."

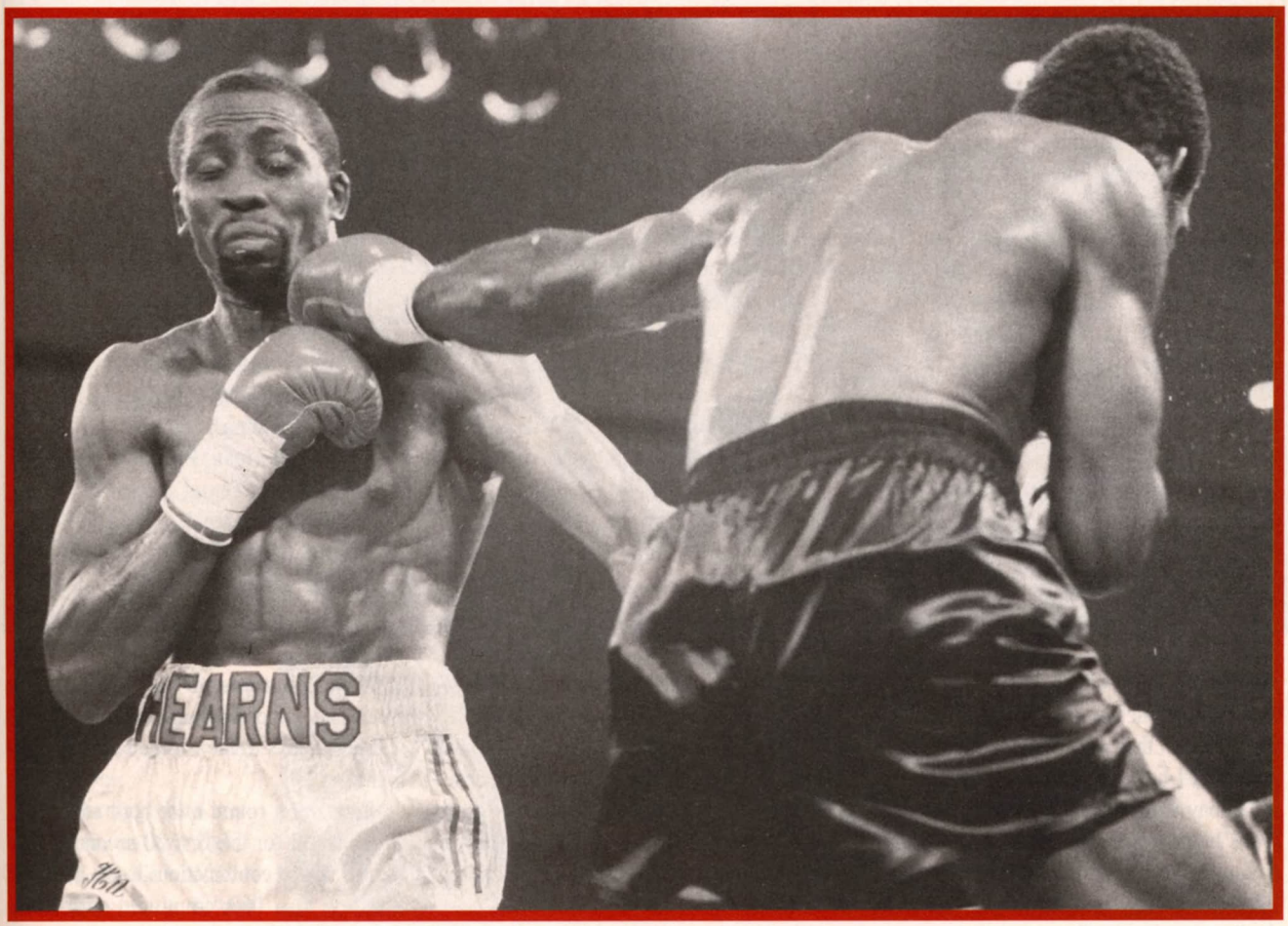
And all this coming from a 4-to-1 underdog, from a raw-skilled brawler who was severely lacerated over both eyes (plus gashed inside the mouth) when he pulled one of the biggest shockers in the 160-pound division since a bleeding and reeling Rocky Graziano turned it all around against Tony Zale in the sixth round in the middle war of their three-bout series 41 years ago. There were only 21 seconds left in the third round when the unlikely end came thundering down on Hearns. Seconds earlier, Barkley himself seemed ticketed for a TKO defeat.

"Those cuts over both [of Barkley's] eyes were bad," said referee Richard Steele. "He was getting hurt, and I was going to call for the ringside doctor between rounds. It's doubtful if they'd have ever let Barkley come out for the fourth round."

It was the sort of spectacular ending that makes boxing the most unpredictable spectacle in sports. And Barkley is the kind of warrior who can restore one's faith in the human spirit—not to mention the art of matchmaking.

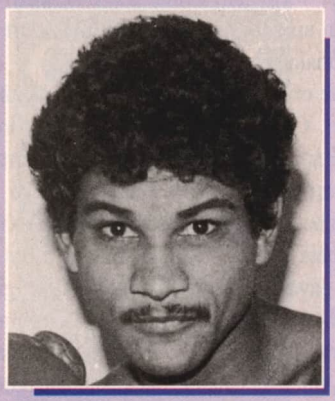
One of eight children, all reared by their mother, Georgia, on short money and long love, Barkley was born in the South Bronx's Patterson Project. He turned pro in December of 1982 only to fall a kayo victim to Robbie Sims in just his ninth start. But he never gave up on himself and kept plugging away. A series of hard-fought victories finally earned Barkley a crack at the vacant WBA middleweight crown against Sumbu Kalambay, which was up for grabs following Sugar Ray Leonard's most recent retirement.

"The first time in Italy I was in good shape, but it was the wrong time," remembered Barkley of his 15-round decision loss to Kalambay. "I didn't have the promoters with me. They didn't care whether I won or lost. There was no American press or com-



A 4-to-1 underdog, Barkley defied the oddsmakers by battling back from an early deficit to record a third-round knockout. Barkley's upset victory reminded historians of Rocky Graziano's sixth-round kayo of Tony Zale in their second fight 41 years before.

THE RING RATINGS, October 1988



Antonio Esparragoza

HEAVYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Mike Tyson, New Jersey
1. **Evander Holyfield,** Georgia
2. **Carl Williams,** New Jersey
3. **Tim Witherspoon,** Pennsylvania
4. **Tony Tucker,** Michigan
5. **Michael Spinks,** Missouri
6. **Adilson Rodrigues,** Brazil
7. **Donovan Ruddock,** Canada
8. **Michael Dokes,** Ohio
9. **Pinklon Thomas,** Michigan
10. **Johnny DuPlooy,** South Africa

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Vacant
1. **Charles Williams,** Ohio
2. **Virgil Hill,** North Dakota
3. **Dennis Andries,** England
4. **Don Lalonde,** Canada
5. **Tony Willis,** Illinois
6. **Bobby Czyz,** New Jersey
7. **Fulgencio Obelmejias,** Venezuela
8. **Chong-Pal Park,** Korea
9. **Lindell Holmes,** Michigan
10. **Graciano Rocchigiani,** Germany

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
World Champ: Sumbu Kalambay, Italy
1. **Frank Tate,** Texas
2. **Iran Barkley,** New York
3. **Michael Nunn,** California
4. **Thomas Hearns,** Michigan
5. **Herol Graham,** England
6. **Mike McCallum,** Jamaica
7. **Matthew Hilton,** Canada
8. **Gianfranco Rosi,** Italy
9. **Donald Curry,** Texas
10. **Julian Jackson,** Virgin Islands

WELTERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Lloyd Honeyghan, England
1. **Marlon Starling,** Connecticut
2. **Simon Brown,** Washington, D.C.
3. **Maurice Blocker,** Washington, D.C.
4. **Mark Breland,** New York
5. **Jorge Vaca,** Mexico
6. **Rollin Williams,** Arizona
7. **Juan Martin Coggi,** Argentina
8. **Roger Mayweather,** Nevada
9. **James McGirt,** New York
10. **Meldrick Taylor,** Pennsylvania

LIGHTWEIGHTS
World Champ: Vacant
1. **Julio Cesar Chavez,** Mexico
2. **Greg Haugen,** Washington
3. **Pernell Whitaker,** Virginia
4. **Jose Luis Ramirez,** Mexico
5. **Edwin Rosario,** Puerto Rico
6. **Vinny Pazienza,** Rhode Island
7. **Rocky Lockridge,** New Jersey
8. **Amancio Castro,** Colombia
9. **Azumah Nelson,** Ghana
10. **Primo Ramos,** Mexico

FEATHERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Antonio Esparragoza, Venezuela
1. **Jeff Fenech,** Australia
2. **Calvin Grove,** Pennsylvania
3. **Marcos Villasana,** Mexico
4. **Juan Jose Estrada,** Mexico
5. **Jeff Franklin,** Nevada
6. **Hector Lopez,** Mexico
7. **Bernardo Pinango,** Venezuela
8. **Victor Callejas,** Puerto Rico
9. **Julio Gervacio,** Venezuela
10. **Jesse Benavides,** Arizona

BANTAMWEIGHTS
World Champ: Vacant
1. **Miguel Lora,** Colombia
2. **Kaosai Galaxy,** Thailand
3. **Kelvin Seabrooks,** South Carolina
4. **Gilberto Roman,** Mexico
5. **Raul Perez,** Mexico
6. **Kaokor Galaxy,** Thailand
7. **Santos Laciar,** Argentina
8. **Sugar Baby Rojas,** Colombia
9. **Wilfredo Vasquez,** Puerto Rico
10. **Orlando Canizales,** Texas

FLYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Sot Chitalada, Thailand
1. **Jung-Koo Chang,** Korea
2. **Fidel Bassa,** Colombia
3. **Myung-Woo Yuh,** Korea
4. **Hilario Zapata,** Panama
5. **Rolando Bohol,** Philippines
6. **Gabriel Bernal,** Mexico
7. **Dodie Penalosa,** Philippines
8. **Ray Medel,** Texas
9. **Duke McKenzie,** England
10. **Miguel Mercedes,** Dominican Republic

mission. To top it off, they threw three gallons of water in the ring before the fight. I had shoes on that were slipping all over the place and I had problems with my balance. Kalambay wasn't really hurting me. In fact, I was hurting him more even though I was having trouble getting leverage for power. I'd beat him easy in a streetfight—either in the Bronx or Verona."

Undaunted, Barkley bounced back following his disappointing defeat to Kalambay. He looked so-so outpointing spoiler Sanderline Williams, but locked up the shot at Hearns by dismantling tarnished Michael Olajide with wicked left hooks. As challenger, Barkley earned his biggest payday of a six-year career: $350,000 to $1.5-million for Hearns.

The bout began pretty much as the oddsmakers figured. Using head feints, Hearns, 160, was cautious of Barkley's lunging attack and avoided damage while countering with left hooks to the ribs and several rights to the head.

Launching round two, both adversaries were careful for the first 30 seconds before Hearns ripped combinations to the head, and Barkley, also 160, countered with a left-right-left. However, Hearns was dishing out the greater punishment. The challenger's

Barkley was smiling after the fight, despite cuts over both eyes. He came dangerously close to having the fight stopped by referee Richard Steele, who doubted the ringside doctor would let the fight continue beyond the end of the third round.

eyes were acquiring lumps, and before the round was over, Steele warned the New Yorker to keep his punches up.

At the conclusion of the second, both of Barkley's eyes were sliced, prompting Steele to call Dr. Donald Romero of the Nevada State Athletic Commission to visit the challenger's corner to inspect the damage. Barkley was also bleeding from a cut inside his mouth and his handlers must have known the scheduled 12-rounder was in deep jeopardy of not seeing the end of round three.

Eddie Aliano showed his mettle as a cut man in mending Barkley's wounds, and the fighter literally ran out of his corner at the bell to start the third. Hearns countered well, but Barkley charged again, this time taking Hearns across the ring into the ropes.

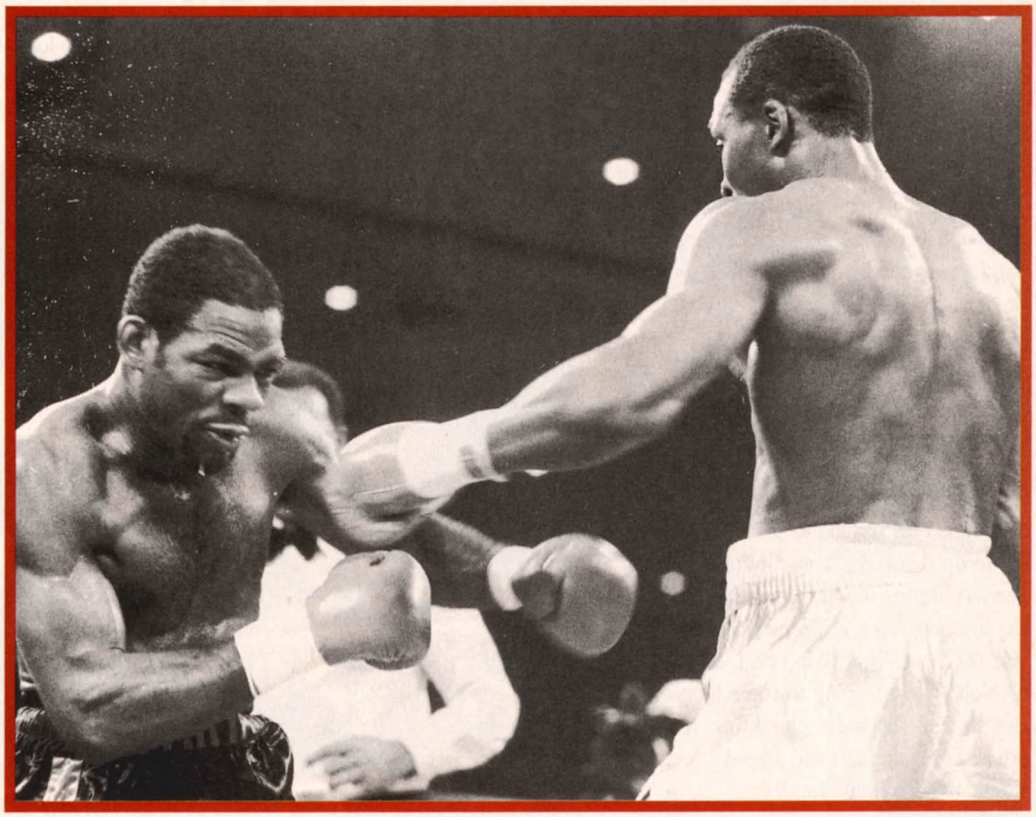
Hearns tagged his man with a left and two rights, knocking Barkley off balance, and quickly scored again with two more rights as Iran's best shots went awry. The Hit Man continued to pressure his bleeding adversary, landing a pair of right-left combinations and then a double hook to the body. Barkley took more punishment to the rib cage and grabbed his tormentor, seemingly hurt by the bodyblows.

Breaking free, Barkley renewed his unorthodox pursuit and caught Hearns with a leaping right that nailed the surprised champ flush on the button. Hearns stiffened and began to fall in slow motion. Before he could hit the canvas, Barkley stepped in and whacked him with another right, causing Hearns to unravel like a clothesline.

Hearns landed with his wide shoulders squarely on the mat, his left glove cocked upward while his right arm was limp under the sweeping hand of Steele tolling the count. Suddenly, as though someone had filled him with a potion of rejuvenation, Hearns bravely rolled his way to an erect position at the count of nine.

Once the tottering Hearns was upright, Barkley, coiled like a tiger, seized the moment. He quickly rushed in and knocked Hearns through the ropes with a closing left. The picture was stunningly reminiscent of the 14th round of the Hit Man's fight with Leonard, when Sugar Ray put him through the ropes with a 25-punch salvo.

Nobody could believe what they had witnessed. When Hearns, who suffered his third loss against 45 victories (38 knockouts), was finally able to leave the ring under his own



Hearns dished out the greater punishment in the early going, opening cuts over both of Barkley's eyes. The Blade's lunging attacks made him an easy target for Hearns' precision punches.

Bleeding and under constant attack from Hearns, Barkley nevertheless continued charging at the Hit Man. His wide, sweeping punches eventually caught up with Hearns in the third.

power, the rudely dethroned WBC titleholder paused on the apron and smiled wanly. Then he shrugged his massive shoulders to the crowd, as if to ask, "What happened?"

"The punch? I didn't even see it," said Hearns. "I thought I was clear, but when I went down, I don't know what I thought. I know I wasn't in control. Now I know what the other guys feel like that I've been beating on.

"I felt good going into the fight. Now, of course, I feel disappointed. I'll have to think about my boxing career, but tonight Iran Barkley was the better man. I was surprised he took a helluva shot. This guy came to fight."

Ironically, Hearns was virtually unmarked while Barkley had patches over both eyes and ultimately needed 16 stitches.

"I'd definitely give Tommy a rematch anytime he wants," said the gracious winner, who upped his pro log to 25-4 (16). "All he has to do is ask. He's worthy of a rematch. Thomas Hearns is a terrific, great champion. He deserves to be a legend. Hearns fought 'em all … even if he didn't beat 'em all."

Nobody was trying to force humor, but Hearns had the press chuckling when he reached over the dais and placed a long arm around the slouching Barkley.

"Man, do you know what you did? You outhit the Hit Man tonight. How can that be?"

Barkley, a genuine tough guy in the ring, couldn't keep his emotions in check when the subject of his Bronx buddy Davey Moore was broached. Moore, the former WBA junior middleweight titleholder, had been killed three days earlier in a bizarre accident at his home in Holmdel, New Jersey. The 28-year-old former titlist was crushed to death when an unoccupied car rolled down his driveway and ran over Moore, who was trying to stop it.

"I've been thinking a lot about a very good friend, a brother I want to pay tribute to—Davey Moore," said Barkley.

Suddenly, the dam burst and all the pent-up emotion he'd been smothering exploded in an anguished cry and he lowered his head on the back of his arms and sobbed unashamedly.

To take the tragedy one step farther, Barkley's mother wasn't at the Hilton on the night of her son's greatest triumph. Instead, she was on vigil at a Harlem hospital where another son, Alfred, is terminally ill with cancer.

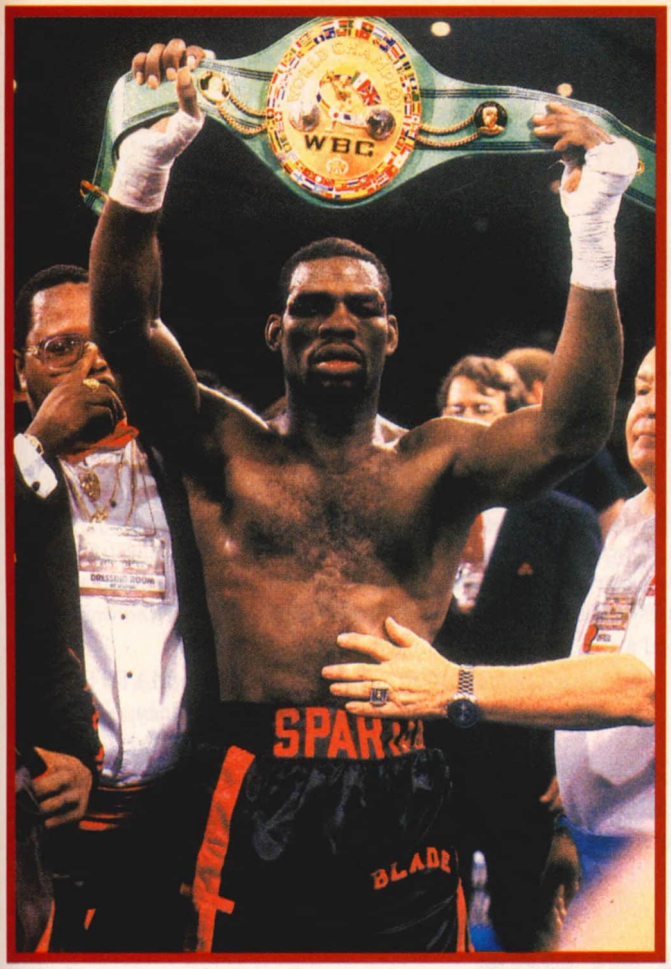
Earlier in the day, she'd spent time with Iran's father, who is also gravely ill with cancer.

Even before he beat Hearns, Barkley told his mother to go house hunting.

"Mom told me she wanted a ranch type house with a big kitchen," said the engaging Barkley, a family man with a wife and two daughters. "She also said something about a bedroom filled with diamonds. The diamonds might have to wait a little while, so I hope she's only kidding."

Even if Mama Barkley isn't jesting about a bedroom full of ice, she may not have to wait too long. Bob Arum, Top Rank's mover and shaker who promoted the original, is anxious to bring "The Blade" and the Hit

Hearns bravely got up after being knocked down the first time in the third, only to be sent through the ropes shortly after action resumed. The image of Hearns falling through the ropes was eerily similar to when Sugar Ray Leonard toppled the Hit Man in their first fight.



Barkley overcame some personal hardships to win the WBC belt. Davey Moore, a friend of Barkley's, was killed in a bizarre accident three days before the fight, and Barkley's father and brother were both stricken with cancer.

Man back to Las Vegas in the fall. Arum reportedly has a signed contract if he can get the WBC championship committee to waive its rule against immediate return matches involving dethroned champions.

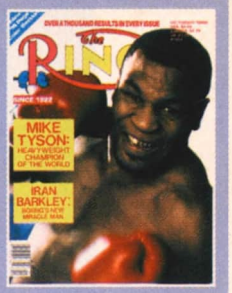
Hearns, who celebrates his 30th birthday October 18, is anxious to face Barkley pronto, rather than play an extended waiting game into retirement. Hearns already has the blessing of his guru, Manny Steward, who insisted Hearns "can effectively fight again because it wasn't a long, drawn-out beating. One punch did all the damage. Tommy was like a guy pitching a shutout and then the other guy hits a home run. When you're in there with a home run hitter, that can happen."

Best of all for the Barkley clan, their reigning hero's newfound affluence at the box office should elevate him to the seven-figure earning level the next time out. And if the family starts talking about ice again, well, that's just what some fight people figure Barkley will lay on Hearns the second time around—the big chill!

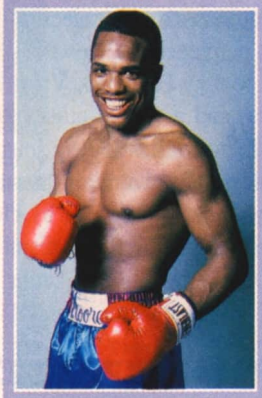
* * *

ADDENDUM: Barkley's title reign didn't last long. In his first title defense, he was upset in a 12-round split decision against the legendary Roberto Duran. Barkley did eventually grant Hearns a rematch, but it came four years later and was for the WBA light heavyweight belt. The Blade won a 12-round split decision. Barkley would go 14-12-1 the rest of his career and retire in 1999 with a 43-19 (28) record. ■

THE RING, January 1983



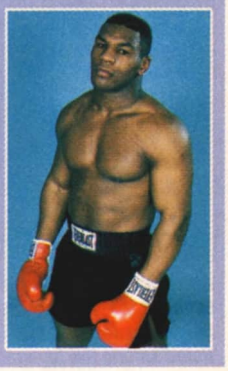
The Cover: The 22-year-old Mike Tyson was everywhere in this issue. "Iron Mike" was not only king of the ring, it seemed like he was king of the world after his career-defining, 91-second demolition of Michael Spinks. Tyson had strong crossover appeal during this time in his career, not only appearing on the cover of THE RING, but on other national publications as well.



Remembering Moore: THE RING remembered Davey Moore, the WBA junior middleweight titlist who was tragically killed when an unoccupied car rolled over him. The four-time New York Golden Gloves champ had tried two unsuccessful comebacks after losing the 154-pound title to Roberto Duran in 1983. His final record stood at 18-5 (14).

Kings Of Clout: THE RING took a look at some of boxing's biggest hitters, including Earnie Shavers, one of the heavyweight division's all-time hardest one-shot punchers. Shavers showed his power by destroying former heavyweight champ Ken Norton in one round in 1979.

Du Plooy The Kayo King ... Or Paper Tiger: South African heavyweight Johnny Du Plooy was knocking out everyone, including Mike Weaver in a rematch, but despite his glossy 18-1 record, skeptics abounded. The criticism came because many of Du Plooy's fights ended in controversy. Du Plooy also had poor training habits and dubious motivation.



Fighter Of The Month: After his victory over Spinks, Tyson was being mentioned in the same elite class as all-time great heavyweight champions such as Muhammad Ali. Beating Spinks erased any doubt as to who was the best heavyweight in the world, and it appeared there was no one in the division who could pose a serious threat.

COME OUT WRITING

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, The Ring, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034. Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

WHERE'S ROY?

I agree with your selection of James Toney as 2003's Fighter of the Year. No complaints there. What perplexed me, however, is THE RING's Honorable Mentions in the Fighter of the Year category. Manny Pacquiao, Vitali Klitschko, Ricardo Mayorga, Shane Mosley, Cory Spinks, Antonio Tarver, and a couple others were included. But one fighter that I was very surprised not to see even mentioned was Roy Jones. Jones also had a great year in '03 by becoming the first former middleweight champion to win a heavyweight title in 100 years. Also, he reclaimed the light heavyweight title in '03 by closely defeating Tarver. Although I highly respect the opinions of THE RING, I found Roy's dismissal a slap in the face to Jones.

MATT FJARLIE
Sydney, Nova Scotia

SPINKZZZZZZ

I just saw a video replay of the Cory Spinks-Ricardo Mayorga fight. Am I the only fight fan in America who believes that the referee should have disqualified Spinks—for not fighting?

SAM FELDMAN
Sherman Oaks, CA

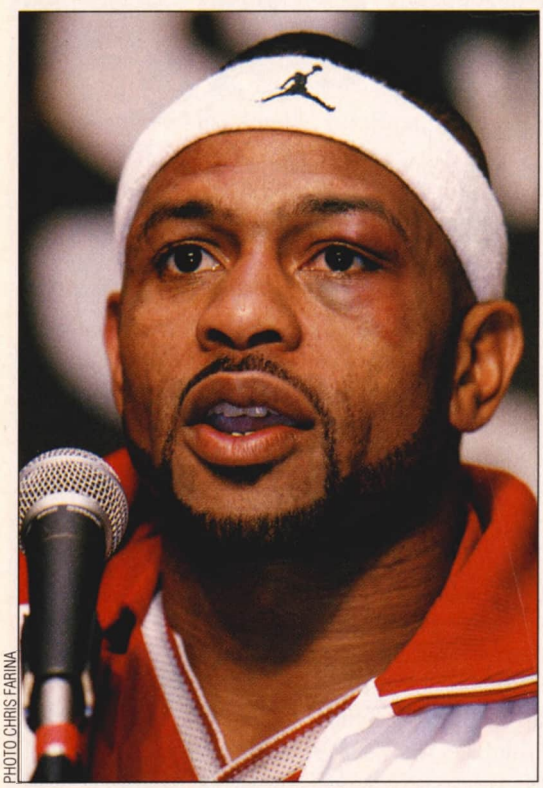


PHOTO CHRIS FARINA

Although his bout with John Ruiz was selected as 2003's Event of the Year in THE RING's Annual Awards Special (May 2004), reader Matt Fjarlie is distressed that Roy Jones wasn't listed among the honorable mentions for Fighter of the Year.

ESPN BLUES

What in the world is wrong with ESPN? When they announced that they would no longer pay licensing fees to the promoters who provide fights for their program, I saw red. It is bad enough that the networks do not feature boxing as often as they once did, but now ESPN2 is about to ruin a great program. If anyone from ESPN or ESPN2 happens to read this, I hope that they will wake up and realize they are not only denying the promoters, but they are also denying the many fans as well.

SAMUEL ROBINSON
superstarsam2003@yahoo.com

ANOTHER PUNCHING POLITICO

As a former amateur boxer, licensed boxing judge, and Toughman contestant, I was very happy to see your article "The Pugilists Who Tried Politics" contained within the first issue of my new subscription to THE RING (May 2004). I thought your timing was perfect, considering we're in a presidential election year.

As a member of the Maine House of Representatives, I've found the lessons I learned in the ring to occasionally be of value in The House, although, fortunately, not in a physical way. In any event, I truly enjoyed Pete Ehrmann's well-written article, and I appreciate THE RING's willingness to print a creative piece such as this.

CHRIS GREELEY
Levant, ME

ONE-ARMED WONDER

I just watched the Erik Morales-Jesus Chavez fight for the second time. I scored it 114-112 for Morales, but if Chavez hadn't hurt his shoulder, he

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Gallant Jesus Chavez connects with a left to the face of Erik Morales in their February 2004 junior lightweight bout. Reader Jeremy Guerrieri believes that if Chavez had not injured his right shoulder early in the bout, he just might have scored an upset.

probably would have won. Everyone in the junior lightweight division should watch out for Chavez, including Diego Corrales and Joel Casamayor.

JEREMY GUERRIERI
Concord, OH

THE STENCH LINGERS

May I say how much I agree with my fellow countryman, Robert Jones, who expressed disgust at the hometown decision in the Sven Ottke-Robin Reid fight in Germany in the May 2004 issue's "Come Out Writing." It was an outrageous decision, just about the worst I have ever seen. The referee, an obese version of Oliver Hardy, puffed around the ring pulling up Reid every time he landed a blow on Ottke, and the visually challenged judges must have been in another world. It stank. To misquote another Englishman, there is something rotten in the state of German boxing.

JOHN WETHERELL
Pulborough, England

DEAR LENNOX ...

Stay retired. You have nothing more to prove, and retiring on top is something so few greats were able to do. My all-time favorite and inspiration was Muhammad Ali. I yelled at the top of my lungs when Ali won back the belt from Leon Spinks, and then cried my eyes out when he lost to Larry Holmes. I'd rather not see you follow the same path. So stick your chest out and hold your head up high, brother. You ended your career on top, and no one can take that away from you.

JOHN BARRUZZA
Bristol, PA

HALL-WORTHY

I'm writing to comment on Brian Wagner's opinion in the "Come Out Writing" section of the June 2004 issue. Mr. Wagner disagrees with columnist Jeff Ryan's assessment that Arturo Gatti is not a future Hall of Famer. Well, gentlemen, let's look at it from two different angles: First, does Gatti's quality of opposition or his record merit Hall of Fame induction? No. On the other hand, how long has it been since a fighter provided as much action and drama or shown as much courage and determination as Gatti?

Of course, the Hall of Fame should be reserved for the best of the best. But how hypocritical would it be of us not to enshrine this great warrior, the real life Rocky, the guy who scraped himself off the canvas so many times and came back stronger? Maybe there is a way. How about a special section of the Hall reserved for the greatest trilogy of all-time—an Arturo Gatti-Micky Ward Great Warriors Section? I don't believe anybody deserves it more.

KEVIN KAVANAGH
Quebec, Quebec

FOUR TO GO

It is time for Johnny Tapia, Shane Mosley, Hasim Rahman, and Evander Holyfield to hang up their gloves. Holyfield's demise has been painfully obvious for years now, and his after TKO loss to James Toney, it's clear that Evander can no longer beat the best guys in the heavyweight division. Tapia no longer has the reflexes to go along with his heart and desire. He looked woefully slow and out of shape dropping a decision to Frankie Archuleta in his most recent bout, and it can only get worse. Hasim Rahman will never make anyone forget Joe Louis or Muhammad Ali, but to fight a life-and-death battle against washed-up Al Cole should be more than a wakeup call. As far as Mosley is concerned, he no longer can pull the trigger or fire combinations, and certainly doesn't have the hand speed or confidence of his younger days as IBF lightweight titleholder or his best days as welterweight king.

It's time for someone to get the attention of these men and make them understand that there is much life to be lived outside the ring and that it's time to take advantage of it.

DAVID SURGICK
San Jose, CA ■

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Unanimous decision loser Shane Mosley reacts to the right hand Winky Wright has just clipped him with. Reader David Surgick thinks that it's time for Sugar Shane and several other prominent fighters to hang up their gloves.

LOOKING AHEAD

By Eric Raskin

THE REAL MAIN COURSE ON "COLLISION COURSE"

We all know anything can happen in boxing and even the most prohibitive underdog can occasionally win the big one, but still, let's call the June 5 **Oscar De La Hoya/Bernard Hopkins** "On A Collision Course To Make History" show what it is: two mismatches joined together in the hopes of convincing you to spend pay-per-view money. Never in a million years should **Felix Sturm** or **Robert Allen** be PPV main-eventers, but that's exactly what they are. So the question for you becomes, are De La Hoya-Sturm and Hopkins-Allen III worth your hard-earned cash?

In this writer's frank opinion, the answer is a big, fat no. Big PPV bucks should be saved for mouth-watering matchups, no matter how much De La Hoya-**Yory Boy Campas** proved that not everybody thinks that way.

That said, the "Collision Course" show still may be worth ordering. That's because Top Rank has added a fight to the televised undercard that is everything the main event mismatches are not. It's virtually even-money. It's between two all-action warriors. It's a bout hardcore fans have long been asking for.

Lazcano: Clashes with Castillo on June 5

And if **Floyd Mayweather** has vacated the 135-pound title by then as expected, it will even be for THE RING's lightweight championship. The matchup is **Juan Lazcano** vs. **Jose Luis Castillo**, and chances are that it will be worth the cost of the PPV all by itself.

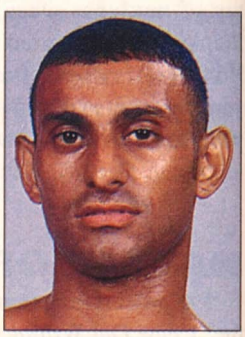
"It's a great fight for boxing and a great fight for me," said Lazcano, THE RING's number-one contender at 135. "This is really great to fight for THE RING belt; it's a respected belt. I set out on this journey to become a champion, and I'm being given the opportunity. It's all up to me and what I do with this opportunity."

Lazcano has certainly made the most of his last several opportunities. He hasn't lost in his last 19 fights (dating back to June '98), and hasn't even let anyone last the distance in his last nine, since his hotly debated decision win over **Jesse James Leija** in August '00. Since then he's stopped **Dorin Spivey** (KO 8), **John-John Molina** (KO 11), **Julio Alvarez** (KO 4), and most recently and most significantly, **Stevie Johnston** (KO 11). That's the same Stevie Johnston who went the distance in a pair of razor-close fights with Castillo in '00.

Perhaps that makes Lazcano the favorite on June 5. But perhaps not, since Castillo also gave Mayweather the two closest fights of his career, closer fights than most believe Lazcano could give "Pretty Boy." The point is, it's not clear who the favorite in this tantalizing bout is. And that's something you definitely can't say about the dual main events on the show.

LISTEN UP

Another tremendous lightweight fight is in the works for the month of June, possibly for the 26th. Huge punchers **Acelino Freitas** and **Diego Corrales** were reportedly close to signing for a showdown at 135 pounds as we went to press. If it comes off, we won't be able to accuse "Popo" of ducking tough fights anymore … In more lightweight news, IBF beltholder **Javier Jauregui** will likely be defending against a **Diaz** over the summer—it's just not clear yet which one. Rejuvenated **Julio Diaz** is his mandatory, but 20-year-old **Juan Diaz** may get the shot … The rumor mill is churning that former featherweight ruler **Prince Naseem Hamed**, now 30, is preparing for a return in July or August. Naz hasn't fought since his dud with **Manuel Calvo** in May '02 (which, you may remember, was so unappealing it turned into a "walkout" bout) … Heavyweight **"Baby" Joe Mesi** is expected to return to the ring in the friendly confines of Buffalo on HBO in August … Two "title" doubleheaders are coming to Japan in June. In Tokyo on June 4, flyweight titlist **Lorenzo Parra** (the man who dethroned **Eric Morel**) will meet **Takefumi Sakata**, while minor featherweight beltholder **Chris John** faces **Osamu Sato**. And in Yokohama on June 28, long-reigning 115-pound titleholder **Masamori Tokuyama** gives **Katsushige Kawashima** a second crack at his belt, while new strawweight king **Eagle Akakura** faces **Satoshi Kogumasaka** in his first defense. ■



Hamed: Are these comeback rumors for real?

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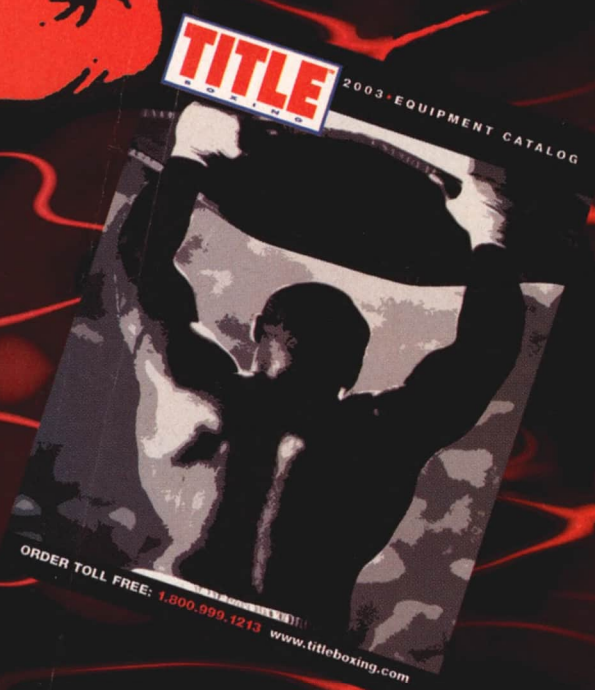

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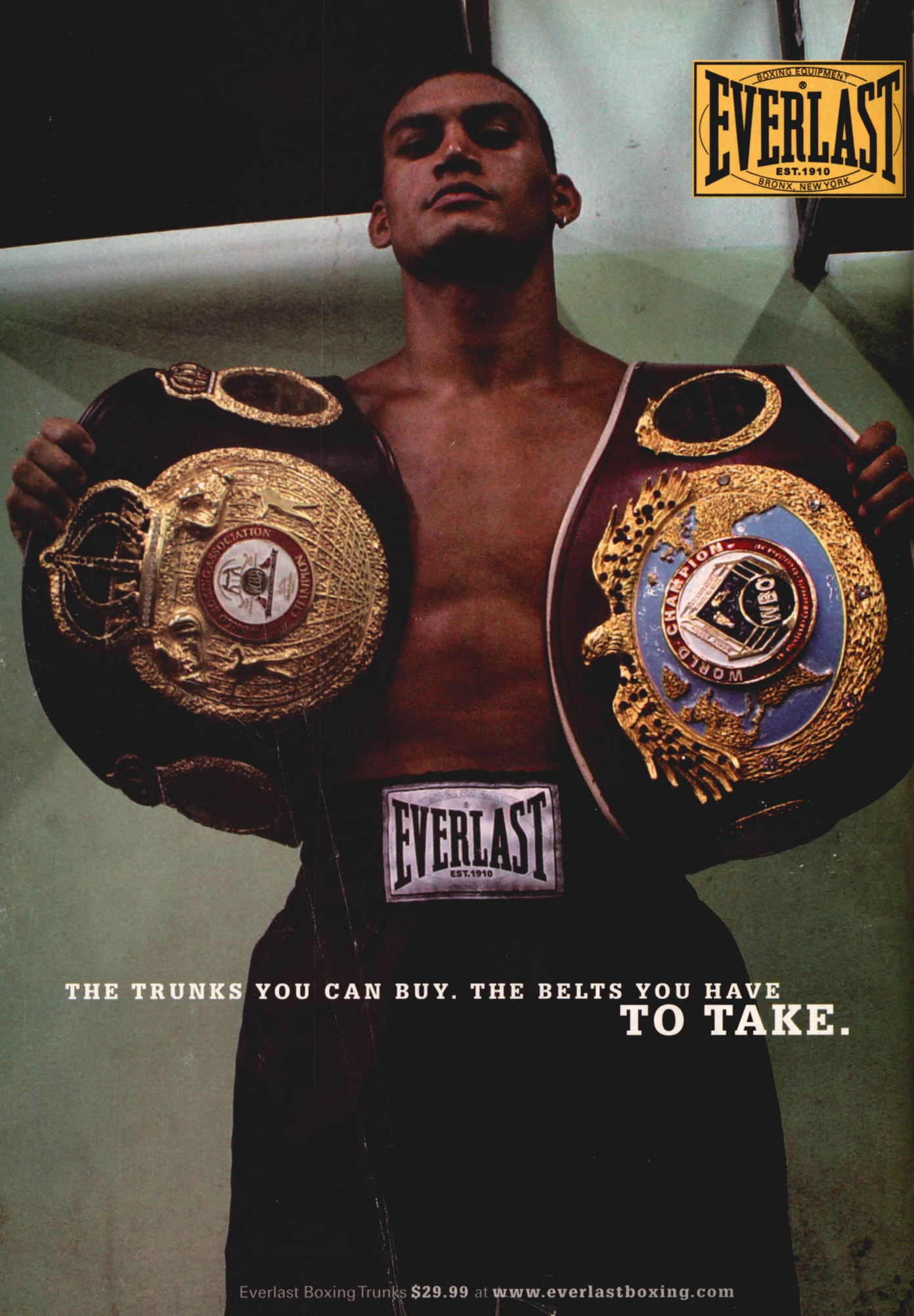
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